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**SOMETHING
THAT BEGINS WITH "T"**



"I was sure you were not real, Peter Pan," he said.

SOMETHING THAT BEGINS WITH "T"

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CHAPTER ONE

When I told all of my family this morning at breakfast that I was going to use the ledger, going to write a story in it, the announcement at first met with flattering approval. That is one of the dear joys about all of my family; so often I am approved of.

"But what," questioned all of my family, "is the story going to be about?"

As yet I had not given much thought to that particular part of it. It will be a very little story," I parried.

"In that great big book," objected all of my family.

The trouble is that the book is big, as thick as my two thumbs and as large as a bread board. Lotta gave it to me the last time I was in the city. She said she thought I might like it to keep lists in, or recipes, or something useful. She did not want it herself, she explained, because she did not care for writing. I was going to refuse it, but I minded my manners in time, remembered it was polite to take things when folks tried to give them, and brought it home with me.

Since then it has been troubling, insisting upon being used. I poke it away in obscure places. It emerges in a few weeks, flaunting its immaculate blankness, suggesting pressed flowers, a scrap-book, a diary, any number of uses just silly enough to be tempting. Last night we, the ledger and I, compromised on this story idea. "Not a diary, mind you," I told it, "because diaries are silly things. Just a story about us."

"Well—" so I answered all of my family's objections—"it is going to be about us, mostly, and we are not very big, so I think the story can't be."

"About us?" questioned all of my family, skeptically.

"And perch-edifice, and the trees, and the sky,—much about the sky,—and nearly neighbor, and Mr. Miser and — other things," I finished lamely.

"Maybe," said all of my family, "maybe you can make some kind of a story about that,"—I could not tell whether the accent on the pronoun was a contemptuous accent or a complimentary accent,—"but if you do it'll be mostly description and I hate description."

I looked coldly on all of my family. Our biggest quarrels have ever been about our variances in literary tastes. I dote on description, and all of my family knows it.

He squirmed and helped himself to the jam; he smiled at me, that little coaxing friendly smile with the dimple. I was nonchalant, unobserving, offended.

"See here, old sport," broke out all of my family, "why not make it about Indians and pirates and —"

"Peccary!"

"Oh,— calling names," reproached all of my family.

"We've had Indians and pirates,"— I spoke with passion — "here in perch-edifice until I'm fairly sick of 'em, all of 'em, them and theirs. And I have never complained. Old Red Roister has growled about this room until the very cracks are stuck full of his voice and I've never objected. And now, when I want a story of my own, a girl story, with descriptions, you — you go and try to spoil everything."

"Not everything," objected all of my family, his nose quite wrinkled up with worry, "not everything, old sport."

"I want a description story, a girl story," I persisted.

All of my family slid down from his chair and came over to me. "Put her here," he said, extending his hand. I put her there and we squeezed hands hard and knew that we were at peace. That is our nearest approach to sentiment, our handshake, in the daytime. Sometimes at twilight we do, as all of my family expresses it, "spoon some," but that is at twilight, the special time made gray on purpose by God for folks to love in.

"I'll wash up the dishes," said all of my family.

"But," I objected, "we washed up last night.

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We'll have plenty of cups and things for luncheon and dinner and maybe, if we squeeze, for to-morrow's breakfast. So why?"

"I just thought maybe."

What he just thought maybe, he did not say. But I think he just thought maybe, since I seemed to be in such a mood for girls, I wanted to be a regular girl and wash up after each meal, and be tidy and all that sort of thing. He was mistaken.

He walked across the room and took his cap from the peg. "Well,"—with a splendid assumption of carelessness,—"so-long, see you later."

I hate to be left out of things. All of my family and I have always taken our morning adventure together and now, just because of the girl story, he was going off alone.

"I needn't," I hinted, "begin right away on that story, not first thing this morning."

"It might have been a bear's track," suggested all of my family, wistfully.

No matter that we each knew, quite positively, that it was a track of one of nearly neighbor's cows. No matter at all. Quite truly, as all of my family had said, it might have been a bear's track.

I took my cap from the peg. "Let's hunt," I said.

For nearly a mile we tramped down the trail, side by side and in silence. We don't care much about,

chitter-chatter, talk for talk's sake, all of my family and I. We don't like to disturb the trees in their conversations, because we know they must be saying such old important things; we don't like to disturb our wee river in its song because it sings so gladly, so much better than either of us can sing, and we like to listen and it would seem rude to interrupt. It is such an accomplished wee river, our river, making up music all the time, right out of its mind, and never missing a note. Sometimes, early in the spring, we suspect that it is singing grand opera; just to show off, because it thinks that neither of us knows one thing about grand opera. We don't. But we won't let that smarty wee river know, so we stand by its side and talk loudly of literature. Like this:

"A?" say I.

"Anatole France," says all of my family.

"B?" says all of my family.

"Bernard Shaw," say I.

"C?" say I.

All of my family hesitates. "Cooper," says he, but I nudge him, quickly, because I am afraid Cooper isn't nearly high-brow enough.

"You mean," I suggest, "Benvenuto Cellini?"

And so we go on until we are sure wee river is sufficiently impressed by our knowledge, and then we usually giggle some because we know wee river is a

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gossip and will tell the trees along the way, and the lake away down there when she reaches it, "Fearfully clever folks, up there on the mountain."

"But you said," spoke all of my family, suddenly,—we had been tramping and saying nothing, you remember,—"but you said, 'Oh, I am so glad, it is a boy!'"

Desperately I wanted to stop and hug my family, tight hug, and kiss the worry wrinkle out of his nose; but it was a bright blue morning, blazing with sunshine, and how he would disapprove of such an action, so I dare not. Instead:

"Of course, old man. And I was glad. Always have been glad. Supposing it had been a girl! Fancy! A girl in perch-edifice!"

"Only," said all of my family, though the wrinkle was erasing itself a bit, "you are a girl, Phyl."

"Not a girly-girl," I protested.

"No."

"And two girls," said I, "think how mad it would make nearly neighbor if two girls were living in perch-edifice."

All of my family thought, and tittered, and I tittered, and then, right there, we found the bear's track and got quite silly-thrilly with excitement, and cut us two splendid guns from the alder trees and stalked that bear for miles and miles. He got away from us though, wily fellow, and perhaps we didn't

much care for he might have been the father of a family. One can never tell about things of that sort.

For luncheon we had hotcakes and huckleberry jam, and after that, for convention's sake, we had lessons. We don't like 'em, lessons, all of my family and I, but we have to have 'em, else the school board will catch us some day, and eat us alive — oh, no, I was thinking of the bear,—and argue with us and arrest us and all manner of disagreeables that begin with "a."

Many times we have considered this question but, sometimes we forget, so: "I don't see any sense," said all of my family, this afternoon, in the midst of Geography, "in me learning the capitals of all the states and their locations. You," accusingly, "don't know 'em."

"Oregon, Salem, Willamette River," I boasted.

"Our own state," deprecated all of my family, "but you look in the Geography to hear me say the others."

"I used to know them," I defended, "I had to learn them."

"I don't see any sense," reiterated all of my family, "in learning things and then going and forgetting them."

"But," I objected, "if you tracked that argument down to the very tail end, then you'd never learn anything for fear you might forget it."

"Wisdom?" questioned all of my family. He

labors, hopefully, under the impression that some time I am going to say something wise.

"No, just a say-so."

"It kind'a sounds like wisdom," he persisted.

"Then," said I, running back to the path of our original argument, "there is college to think of, old scout." I suppose I sighed, for his nose wrinkled worriedly.

"See here," he said, after a moment's deep consideration, "I've been thinking. If I just naturally didn't learn any of these old things, I just naturally wouldn't know enough to go to college and I just naturally couldn't go. Then we could just stay here in perch-edifice, 'cause I guess that 'ud fix the old school board and everybody so's they wouldn't bother us."

"All right," I agreed cheerfully, closing the geography, "let's then. Let's grow up in deepest ignorance. It'll be more fun and easier too, and before long we'll be saying, 'have went,' and, 'has came,' as nearly neighbor does. Come," I started to get my cap,— "let's adventure. As you say, there isn't any real use in learning things and having ideals and ambitions."

All of my family looked doubtfully at me. No — I was evidently in earnest. I had taken my cap from the peg. He reached for the geography and opened it. "I'm certainly s'prised at you," he said.

"Oh, come on," I urged, "it will be much more fun."

"No. Can't."

"Why?"

"I don't know why,"—irritably—"only we just can't. Massachusetts, Philadelphia, Massachusetts Bay."

And so, after a while our lessons were finished and we went out to play. The year is doing March now and, as all players know, March is the most fun of all the months. It is so chuck full of discoveries, here in Oregon: fuzzy yellow white whiskers on all the pussywillows; scarlet tips on the hazel trees; bright calico pink currant blossoms just peeking through; love-time and birth-time in the world.

"Does it mean," questioned all of my family when I had told him my thoughts, as I usually do tell him, "that all the trees and bushes 'n' everything are men and women, folks, like us?"

"About that, 'seems to me."

"Maybe that's why we never get lonesome up here, like people ask us don't we, then?"

"Must be why."

We thought of that for a while as we walked along and the ground sudge-sjudged under our feet. We passed nearly neighbor's place, and his clover fields were sleek and green and the path to his house was bordered with bright crocus flowers, spruce and fine,

like two long lines of children marching into school. Our own crocus flowers are not out yet, little laggards, and we have tended them so carefully; too carefully, perhaps.

All day to-day the sky has been light blue, the color of white kittens' eyes, and the furriest, fleeci-est clouds have been drifting about in it, so we had a perfect right to hope for a sunset. But, just before sunset time, a great bed of clouds with gray blankets spread out in the west, and the sun, lazy sun, jumped right into it and went to sleep without troubling to send a single color into the sky. It was disappointing. All of my family and I were rather sulky about it for a while.

And now it is nighttime in the world and another day has been used up. I hate to see them go. I am greedy about them. I wish I might hoard them, as people say Mr. Miser hoards his money, so that if a day came which I couldn't love I might say: "No, thank you, to-day in this month, I don't care for you. I am going to take that day away back in March and use it in your stead."

All of my family is fast asleep, but not, alas, tucked up in his little bed. He wanted to play Indian to-night so he is rolled up in a rug in front of the fire. To-morrow, I suppose, his poor little bones will ache and his back will be quite stiff. But if he cares to do that way, if it means extra joy to him, who am I to

say that he shan't? If I cared to roll up in a rug, instead of going properly to bed, how it would annoy me should all of my family refuse to allow me to do so. Good night, then, little Indian. Good-by, March day.

CHAPTER TWO

Outside the rain is hissing away and the wind is as cross as can be about it and all of my family and I are much worried about nearly neighbor's crocus flowers in their bright Sunday-go-to-meeting dresses; so much too little they seem to stand up and sauce back at such a day. After a while we are going to put on our rubber boots and coats and hats and run up to nearly neighbor's and stand on the side lines and "root" for them. We are glad ours have not come out yet; it would be so sad to sit here and see them buffeted about by the storm.

All of my family is nearly cross to-day. I suspect his bones of aching, though "Indian's bones ache!" delivered scornfully, is the only answer my solicitations receive.

He is sitting in his den,—the blue and white rag rug is his den,—just now, reading a red book surreptitiously. By that I mean that, since taking it from the shelves, he has made no comments about it. Usually it is: "Listen here, Phyl, here's a good one," or, "Old scout, what exactly does—so and so—mean?" Like that, when he is reading and I am not.

But to-day, though he is evidently absorbed in the book, he has said no word at all.

Without the least intention of prying I stopped there and asked him what he was reading.

"Aw, gee whiz, Phyl! Can't a fellow have any personality?"

"Personality—" I pondered.

"Privacy, I mean,"—with a blush, not, I regret to say, for his surliness but because, as so frequently happens when all of my family attempts words not often included in his vocabulary, he had used the wrong one.

He must not be such a little old crosspatch. I wonder what I shall do about it. I don't want him to be a little Lord Fauntleroy. Heaven forbid! I'd much rather he'd scowl and growl at me than call me, "dearest." But I do want him to be pleasing. And he is—distinctly pleasing. So, after all, why the row?

"And now, Phyl," said all of my family to me, just after I had finished asking myself questions, up there, "how about that story—novel—that you are going to write?"

He said it pedantically, accusingly, so I quavered my disagreement: "Not novel. Just story—for me."

"Well," with a great sternness, "whatever it is you'll have to begin it."

"Oh, as to that," my manner was jaunty, "I have begun it."

"No!"

"Yes!"

"I'll bet," gloomily, "that you haven't begun it right."

"Why, I have so!" Then, just to prove it to him, I read the first chapter aloud.

"And that," said my critic when I had finished, "just naturally isn't any novel, nor story, at all."

"What then?" I demanded.

"I don't know. Pure narrative, maybe."

I sat dumbly abashed in the face of this sudden superior knowledge.

"Have you a plot?" accused my critic.

"Oh,—er—well, you see, that is going to work itself out."

"You shouldn't put your pen to paper until you have the end clearly in mind."

"But how can I have the end clearly in mind," I protested, "when it hasn't come yet?"

"You must make it up out of your head, and besides that you must have a hero and a heroine —"

"I have. You and I are —"

"And you must introduce them in your first chapter."

"We were introduced long, long years ago."

"To the reader. And tell what they look like, that's character, and their names and where they are, that's setting, and your very first opening words must foreshadow the end. And you must work up to the climax like climbing a hill, and then come down quick, like sliding down, and take for instance Kipling's, 'The Light That Failed'—"

"I'll do no such thing," I interrupted, indignantly, "'take for instance!' Nothing! This is going to be my own book. Didn't I tell you?"

"Well, but you have to have some technique, don't you?" Only—he pronounced it "teck-nee-quee."

So it all came out. The mysterious red book was a bound volume of a little literary magazine I had subscribed for years ago when I had aspirations, and ambitions, and such sort of things that begin with "a." And between its brilliant covers it told so accurately and precisely how to write a novel that just any one, from a dishwasher to a duke, who was fortunate enough to possess it, could sit down and do a novel offhand, between plates or princely pomps.

"Only," I explained to all of my family, "I want to do my book as I do my dresses: just whack it out without any pattern."

"I'm afraid," sighed all of my family, "that if you do it won't be any good."

"But my dresses are any good," I argued.

"It won't be a novel," persisted he.

"It shan't be," I answered, "it's a no-name, but it is mine."

The trouble is that I am the weakest of women. And all of my family has a certain quality of wistfulness about him. Too, I suspicion that he likes to boss. At any rate, before our conversation was finished I had promised to try to call it a novel, and to begin it all over again, in the proper way, and tell who I am, and who he is, and why, and names and dates and all manner of unnecessaries.

But I did not promise until he had said that if I would begin it properly he would not ask me to read any more of it to him until it was completed. Such discouragement as his wets the wings of inspiration. They are densely damp to-night so I think the proper beginning shall have to wait until to-morrow. Besides, to-day a tiny chipmunk walked right in through our window and up on our table and ate our butter. And that must be told about: how funny he looked sitting up on his hind legs, smearing that butter into his whiskers; and how still we sat, scarce daring to breathe, until he finally jumped down and ran away, right across my foot, and out of the door. And then our visit to nearly neighbor's must be told about, too, and its attending humiliation.

The crocus flowers were bearing up bravely and we, as we had planned, were standing on the side lines

rooting for them,—inaudibly of course, we are not audible ninnies,—when nearly neighbor's door opened and he came out a step. It was too late to run, with dignity, so there we stood and felt like deadbeats.

"Wall," so he greeted us, "see somethin' worth seein' to stand thar in the rain?"

"We were looking at your flowers," I replied.

"Flowers!" growled nearly neighbor, as if he had never before heard of such things, much less planted and tended them.

There seemed, after that, to be nothing in particular to say. All of my family and I, trespassing, squirmed about damply. I wanted to say, "Good-by," or, "Good afternoon," but it did not seem suitable since we had not said, "How do you do?"

Nearly neighbor stood high and dry in his doorway and regarded us wet things contemptuously. Though, for that matter, he ever regards us contemptuously, be we wet or dry.

I might have mentioned the weather but, under the circumstances, it seemed wiser to ignore the weather.

"Flowers!" repeated nearly neighbor. "Huh! Wall, if you take my advice you two 'ull get in out'n this sop." Then he went into the house and said that in his experience he had been fortunate in having met but few people, two people in fact, who did not have sense enough to go in out of the rain. We did not hear him say that, of course, but we knew that he did say it, just the same.

"He," said I to all of my family, "is an old pentadactylous."

"What's that?" inquired all of my family.

"A swear word," I answered, and that of course is no way at all to "bring up a boy." How I despise that expression! All of my family shall bring himself up or not get up at all.

But to return to nearly neighbor: He is a good man, a just man (I hate to admit that "just," but I have to), a hardworking, sensible man and thoroughly unlikable. And the reason I don't feel mean about writing that, behind his back, is, that if he were writing of us I know he could not muster up one complimentary adjective. The trouble is, I think, that when we came here seven years ago there was a plague of ants, big ones, who came at the same time. He connected us with those ants and he has never been able to dissociate us. He extinguished the other troublesome bugs, but he can't get rid of us. I think, though, that if we'd consent to have the big trees cut down, the great tall trees that hug about perch-edifice, he might forgive us and make up.

Those trees annoy him. They do more than annoy him; at times they seem to madden him. He has an orderly mind and a scheme of his own (he calls it the Lord's), concerning things as they should be, and one of the important items in this scheme is that houses should be built in clearings. He considers our prefer-

ence for trees arbitrary and abnormal. Trees, in his scheme, are made to be chopped down. Each fall he predicts confidently, cheerfully and hopefully that one of our trees, or one of their big branches, will fall during the winter and smash our little house and us. Each spring we emerge, confident, cheerful, hopeful and unsmashed. If we keep whole a few more winters, I fear the man will lose faith in eternal justice. Oh,—hum. Poor nearly neighbor.

And I pause, and pucker, and wonder why the "poor." And I'm forced to decide that I thought it because he is quite different from us. Is anything at all so egotistical, so impudent, as pity? Sympathy is different; that means knowledge. Pity just means comparison. And if all of my family were awake now he'd say, "Wisdom?" and I should be forced to answer, as usual, "No, just a say-so."

But all of my family is up in his room asleep, quite civilized to-night. And the splash of the rain outside, and my fire dropping into coals, and my lamp burning low give me an exquisite feeling of loneliness that I'd like to linger with and play with for a while. But my lazy mouth keeps yawning, impolitely, and my heavy eyes keep trying to shut themselves, so I am quite sure that if I stopped to luxuriate in loneliness I should merely go to sleep and then I'd be a cross, achey-boned Indian to-morrow.

CHAPTER THREE

"A promise," said all of my family to me this morning, as if to clinch and end an argument already grown too long, "is a promise."

"I hope," I replied, crossly, "that you are not going to be the sort of person who goes about calling a spade a spade and preening and thinking you have said something. Any unimaginative person could call a spade a spade; it takes a realist or an imagist, or someone of that sort to call a spade a digger."

"Wisdom?" questioned all of my family.

"No," I answered, "Chesterton, I think, but I'm not sure. Usually when I say something that I think is clever I remember just at the end that it is Chesterton."

"Well, anyway," said all of my family, "a promise —"

"May be a promise," I replied, sternly, "but it may also be a nuisance, a pest, a chain, a —"

"Oh, all right," said all of my family.

"All right — what?" I questioned, suspiciously.

"Just all right," said all of my family. He hung up the tea towel.

I turned the dishpan upside down in the sink and found that I felt much better. I always do feel much better after dumping the dishwater.

"Aren't you going to do the mush kettle?" questioned all of my family.

"Averruncator!"

"Oh," reproached all of my family, "calling names!"

"For fifteen minutes I had been purposely forgetting that mush kettle."

"Oh, all right."

"The wood box is empty," said I.

"Oh, all right," said all of my family.

"I wish," I protested, "I dearly wish that you'd stop all righting everything."

"Oh, all —" began all of my family. "Is to-day," he began over again, "one of your want-to-lead-a-life-of-crime days?"

"I want to lead a life of crime!" I thundered.

"And —" he prompted, worriedly.

"And be a fiend in human form," I finished with decision.

"Then," sighed all of my family, "I guess I'd better fill the wood box and beat it down to Mr. Miser's."

I wanted to beat it down to Mr. Miser's with him but, since I was not invited, I could not intrude, so here I am, lying on my stomach in front of the fire,

the ledger open before me, the red-covered book closed beside me; and there is all of my family out slushing around in this good warm rain and all because of a proper beginning. Here goes:

CHAPTER ONE

(I am positive that I can't do it properly: "Introduce your characters and give the setting," says the red book.)

My name is Phyllis Winfree and the name of my adopted son is Patrick Winfree and I like his name better than I like mine because I named him myself and my great-greats named me.

I am twenty-five years old. I am not very tall, nor very fat. The color of my eyes is gray, I guess, and the color of my hair is brown. I wear it bobbed short for convenience though, to tell truly, I know I would not wear it that way if it were particularly unbecoming. I pride myself (and brag to Pat about it), on the fact that I am not a girly girl. Yet — I don't know. I love silk stockings, and crepe-de-chine, and fussy boudoir caps, and pink ribbon, and white massage cream, and ruffled parasols, and tippy high heels and "Sonnets from the Portuguese." But, as I can't have any of those things, except the Sonnets, I turn up my nose and act sour-grapishly, and wear cotton stockings, and pin a towel around my head when I need a fancy cap, and thank the days and the

years for not having marked wrinkles in my face, as yet, making massage cream a necessity instead of a luxury. I don't need to wear glasses on my nose, and I haven't any corns on my toes and all of me is perfectly healthy so, of course, I'm happy; not, I hope, conspicuously, blatantly glad, ever busy a-counting my mercies, but as happy as any sane, not wholly selfish, person could be in a world where there are so many unhappy folks. There, I'm introduced. Now for Pat:

If he was two years old when I got him, and I think he was just about that age, he is nine years old now. He is precisely the sort of boy one wants to describe as a "kid"; not handsome by any means, but he has a pleasant, perky nose, and round, wide, brown eyes, and plenty of dark red hair and a fascinating grin, now that his second teeth have come to fill the gap. Also he has a dimple that some girl, some day, is going to gloat over and poke. I hope that he is quite like all nine year old boys. I think he is. Though, of course, having just me for a play-mate is bound, I am afraid, to make him a bit different. But he isn't a girly boy, a sissy boy, he isn't and he shan't be; not if I have to smash every bit of femininity in me and get to be a regular Red Roister myself. There, Pat is introduced. Now for the setting.

But I've gone about it all wrong! I'm making a

bobble of it, this proper beginning. A reference to the red book has convinced me: "Don't intrude your setting," says the red book, "simply let your characters appear moving about gracefully in it." It sounds to me like a bowl of goldfish, and Pat and I haven't been moving about at all, gracefully nor ungracefully. "Sift your descriptions in sparingly," continues the red book, and that sounds like a cook book to me, and I haven't done any sifting. Now I am not dull, and I did promise Pat to try, so I'll begin all over again more seriously, more honestly this time; but I'll have to dig away back into the past and I hate digging into the past. Well — here goes:

CHAPTER ONE

Seven years ago, and it might have been seven years ago to-day, because the days exactly match in color, all grayness, and in wind and in rain, I woke up in my neat little bedroom and yawned, I suppose, and stretched, and was not a bit more afraid to meet that day than I was afraid, this morning, to meet this day; less afraid, perhaps, because I was younger, and because I was loved, and because I was much less wise.

I remember that morning vividly. I had overslept and I could hear my sister-in-law,— I was living with married brother and her then,— slamming about with

unnecessary noise in the dining-room. Their house was a conventional five-roomed bungalow, my room adjoined the dining-room; hence the slamming.

Guiltily and somewhat crossly, too, I jumped out of bed, put on my kimono, poked on my slippers and opened the door.

Lotta was spick and span in a blue gingham morning dress,—too tight around the hips,—and neatly laced high shoes. Lotta is always spick and span and neat and, though she is not overly fat, she always conveys the impression of tightness.

"Why didn't you wake me," I said, "to help?"

"You might as well sleep," she sighed, "while you can."

I was to be married in two months. My sister-in-law always sighs when she refers to marriage. Now I believe I understand those sighs better. Then they made me indignant.

When she had finished her sigh she told me that she had kept my breakfast hot and I thanked her and went into the kitchen to get it. That was good of Lotta, I thought, and I was grateful.

In the kitchen I found that there was nothing hot there, at all, except my resentment. I was not resentful because of the flabby fried egg in the cold heater, and I wasn't resentful because of the pot of cold coffee on the fireless stove, but I was bitterly resentful because I had been grateful.

I poured out some of the cold coffee and tried to drink it. I fancied I had a headache and needed hot coffee. I felt very sorry for myself, and I sought about in my mind and found Henry's (that was my sweetheart's name; I'm sorry it was, but it was), found his love for me and snuggled against it like a pillow cushion. I'd tell him, when I saw him, about how cold the coffee and I had been this morning, and about how I'd had no breakfast and a splitting headache, and he'd be so sorry for me and call me "little girl,"—little girl was fashionable seven years ago, you'll remember,—and tell me how different it all should be when I was his and he could take care of me.

I shivered back into my bedroom and began to put on my shoes and stockings. Lotta came in. She never knocked. It was her house, after all, you see.

"By the way," she said, "Henry telephoned this morning. He wants you to call him."

"Anything particular, I wonder?"

"He didn't say." She gave the impression that Henry should have said; that Henry had been most rude. She has an odd compact way of closing her mouth.

I finished buttoning my shoes and then I went into the little hall where the telephone was. Central was a long time getting the number for me and as I sat and waited I had a few pleasurable thrills: it was good, always, to hear Henry's voice, strong and low with love

wrapped up in it. Henry did love me. It was pleasant to be loved.

At last a woman's voice, weak and shaky, "Hello," came out of the receiver to me. I was conscious of a pang of jealousy. What should a woman be doing in my man's office? Had he engaged a stenographer? Well — he shouldn't.

I asked for Mr. Anderson.

"Oh-o-o," trembled the voice, "he — he — haven't you heard?"

"No," and my own voice wobbled now. "What — is — it?"

"Oh-o-o," the voice began again, and then: "He was killed, just a few minutes ago — in the elevator —"

I dropped the telephone receiver on the table as if it were some horrible murderous thing. I felt so. Then I got to my feet, noticed one of married brother's overcoats hanging on the hall rack, thought how convenient that it should be right there, put it on, opened the front door and went out into the street.

My next thought was that it was fortunate I had put on my shoes and stockings, else I should be out walking through the rain in Turkish slippers. Then I remembered the telephone, and wondered whether I should go back and hang it up properly on the hook, and decided not, and then I thought how odd it was that I had been cross because my coffee was cold.

I had walked very many blocks, I am sure, before I once thought, consciously, of what the woman's voice had said to me over the telephone. When I did think of it I spoke it aloud, so: "Henry has been killed in an elevator," I said, "only — how odd of him to go and do a thing like that." And then: "But this is sorrow," I told myself, "real sorrow. The man you were going to marry is dead. This is real sorrow. Real sorrow." I kept trying to impress it on myself.

"Only," something within me argued, "if this is real sorrow, then folks have ever made too much fuss about it. It doesn't kill one, nor anything like that. It just means walking about in the rain." Of course walking about in the rain was cold and shivery and damp business, and I supposed before long I should be very, very tired, but after all it was bearable. Quite. One could manage it, since one had to. It was fortunate that I had put on my shoes and stockings.

I passed a few people, a girl carrying a heavy suitcase, I remember, and a man with a large comfortable-looking umbrella. They looked at me curiously. I felt very superior to them. They did not know, of course. How surprised they would be if they did know that I had a sorrow! A real sorrow! One thing about sorrow, though, and I was going to tell folks about it some time, set the world straight about it: it wasn't nearly as bad as people had pretended that

it was. It was merely fearfully cold and wet and tired and uncomfortable. But quite bearable. Quite.

I wished that I had an umbrella. I wished that I might go home. I couldn't, of course, since I had to walk in the rain. Besides, Lotta could never understand. She'd blame Henry, horridly.

I came to a bridge and after I had gone across it I began to fumble for a quotation: "'I crossed a bridge with a name of its own;'" I muttered, "No — no. 'And a certain use of its own no doubt —'" But how silly. Of course bridges had uses, else how could people cross over from one place to another place? So it couldn't be a bridge, and besides it had something to do with Shelley, and what should he have to do with bridges? He was drowned. That, of course, was before the days of elevators.

For blocks and blocks I fought with that quotation but the word I was seeking eluded me, though the line, "'Mid the blank miles round about," came to me and afforded me a sort of sensuous satisfaction. I said the words over and over and over as I stumbled along. I was glad when the houses began to get fewer and further apart. That was as it should be. Miles could not be blank with houses in them. Too, the houses I passed annoyed me: they were built so that their back doors opened on the sidewalk. I supposed they did it for the sake of the view, but still it was topsy-turvy and whatever did they do with their garbage cans, and

mops and backdoor things of the sort? Perhaps they were such very nice people that they had no backdoor things. Yet — one had to have some backdoor things. "People who build their back doors on the street," I mused, and wondered whether I'd rather give that to Ibsen or to Lewis Carroll to play with. "Ibsen would have them keeping all of their poultry in the parlor," I thought, "and Carroll would have their table-cloths getting inch deep with crumbs because they had no place to shake them." I smiled, and pulled the smile back sharply: people with real sorrows, fresh that day, should not be smiling.

And then, when the last topsy-turvy house had been left blocks behind, I heard someone crying and I stopped. How delightful it must be, to cry like that! So well I should like to do that my ownself. Squall. Bawl. What a pleasant sensation it must be! But I couldn't. Perhaps, if I should go over there among the tents, and find that crying person and ask them, most politely, just how it was done they might tell me the way and allow me to cry with them. I'd explain to them that it was not merely a whim of mine, that desire to cry, that I needed to cry, needed to so desperately.

When I reached the tents I saw that the people were gypsies. "I might be afraid of them," I thought, "if I did not have more important things than being

afraid to do. I must find that crying person, so that I may cry, too."

I found him, a wee discarded baby boy, lying flat on his back in the doorway of one of the tents, kicking his heels high, opening his mouth wide, quite purple in the face, screaming with all his might.

I stood and looked at him: "What a good time he must be having," I thought, "what an exceedingly good time!"

Then, just of a sudden, my silly senses began partly to right themselves. "He doesn't like doing that way," I thought, "and he isn't having a good time. He hates it. He is not crying for fun, but because something hurts him. Maybe a pin. It won't do. Babies should not cry like that." I stooped and began to hunt for the pin.

A gypsy woman approached me casually. "Whad'a you wan'?" she asked. "Tell'a very nice fortune, lady. Cross the palm with silver?"

"I want to know what is the matter with this baby?"

She shrugged her shoulders: "Oh — he cry," she said.

"Where is his mamma?" I asked sternly.

Another shrug: "No got."

"Well, then, his daddy — his father?"

"No got."

"And that," I answered, "can't be, because babies have to have mammas and fathers."

"He no gypsy baby," explained the woman, "no ours. Along the road he is lost and we take him up."

"I'll take him now," I said and picked him up in my arms. A gasp and a gurgle and another gasp or two and he stopped crying, and then his dimple came out and winked at me and I knew that he had to be mine. "Baby," I said, "will you teach me how to cry?" I had forgotten the gypsy woman.

"Woo-oo —" he answered.

I turned and started away with him. The woman caught at my coat: "Whad you geev for him?" she demanded.

What would I give for him! Why, there was nothing I would not give for him, had I it to give, but — I had nothing. I had brought no money with me. I couldn't give married brother's coat because he would be cross about it. I followed her eyes to my hand that was clasping the baby, and I saw the diamond ring Henry had given me when we were engaged.

"This?" I asked.

"Sure!"

I gave her the ring and walked away with the baby.

It is odd that I remember every step, almost every thought of mine, that day, until I had reached the gypsy camp and had bought my baby. After that I remember scarcely anything: a street car conductor

who said we might ride to town without paying a fare ; a taxicab driver who asked me whether I had been ill ; and then Lotta, her arms spread wide open to me, tears rolling down her round cheeks. .

I put the baby in her arms instead of going into them myself : " Take him, please," I said, " I am so glad he is a boy. He is not a gypsy baby. He says, ' Woo-oo ' very nicely with a dimple. And now I am going to bed and be prostrated."

CHAPTER FOUR

CHAPTER TWO

I know now that Lotta and married brother were dearly kind to me, during the days that came after, but it seemed to me at the time that they were very cruel.

So much I wanted to be prostrated. I wanted to lie quietly in bed, and rest and rest forever and not think of anything, and not see anything, and not hear anything, and not feel anything at all. But they would not let me. That very night,— I am telling this as it seemed to me then,— they started quarreling with me about the baby. Where did I *get* him? Where did I *get* him? Over and over and over they asked that one question, and when I'd answer: "No matter where. I did get him. He is mine," they would persist and beg me to try to think.

I brought out all the answers I had ever heard about where folks got babies, trying to satisfy them: "In a cabbage patch," I'd say. "In a basket at the door. A stork brought him. He came with the doctor." Until at last it occurred to me to tell them the truth, just how I did get him, and I wondered that I had not thought of that before.

So I sat up in bed and told them, and showed them

that my ring was gone, and asked them, *now* would they let me alone.

I heard married brother's voice saying that, of course, the gypsies had stolen him and that they must advertise.

" 'We are advertised by our loving friends,' " I thought, and then I sat up in bed again to say: " But please, Lotta dear, don't take his picture with his clothes all off. They are cunning that way but he might not like it when he gets to be a man."

Lotta reassured me and I lay back down in bed and thought how pleasant it was, after all, to be prostrated.

But the pleasures of a prostration were not to be mine. Perhaps I was too young and nerveless; perhaps I did not care deeply enough; I do not know, but in the morning everything was brutally clear and I did not need my baby to teach me how to cry. I needed him then, though, as I need him now to teach me other things,— so many other more important things.

I had to consent to the advertising of course, and during those dreadful weeks of uncertainty and waiting the fear of losing my baby almost made me forget to be sorry enough about Henry.

We had waited a month, a month which let me keep Patrick (I named him that for no reason at all except that I liked the name because it had a mascu-

line, upstanding sound), and a month which brought spring. All of that month Lotta was beautifully patient about baby, though I never knew it, until married brother told me one April Sunday morning when Lotta had gone to church.

"Lotta," said married brother, "has been beautifully patient about this baby notion of yours, Phyllis, and I have tried to be, too, but now I am afraid you'll have to make some other arrangements for him."

"Only,—" I said, "I don't know what you mean."

"I mean," said married brother, "that we can't have that child here much longer."

"Oh," said I.

"He drives Lotta crazy."

"Oh," said I.

"And scratches up the furniture."

"Oh,—baby scratches."

"And carries things about and loses them. Yesterday he —"

"Yes, I know."

"A baby," continued married brother, "completely disorganizes any household. Disrupts. That sort of thing."

"But — supposing —" said I.

"One's own are different," said married brother.

"But he is my own," I said.

"Nonsense," said married brother.

"When do you want us to move?" I quavered.

"Nonsense," said married brother, again, and added: "You are to stay here with us, Phyllis, of course. There is nothing else for you to do. But you'll have to put the baby in a home, or let someone adopt him — something of the kind."

"Nonsense!" said I.

Pat came toiling up the path; with one hand he held his apron up to keep the contents from spilling out and in the other hand he had the garden shears.

"He'll hurt himself with those," I gasped, running to meet him.

"He has cut all our young geranium plants," said married brother.

There was the difference. I took Pat and went to my own room and began to realize things; chiefest realization was that I did not blame Lotta and married brother at all and that I could not allow them to be beautifully patient any longer because it was ruining their dispositions.

I got out paper and pencil and began to take stock of my resources. I had the beginnings of a trousseau: a lot of absurdly elaborate table linen, dresser covers, hemstitched sheets and face towels and hand-hemmed tea towels. I had the materials for several dresses put away for the time when I had been going to "have the dressmaker." I had a monthly income of thirty dollars a month, my share of the "estate." I had Pat. And I had the "The Bone."

The Bone is a piece of land, up high in the Oregon hills, situated, as married brother scornfully says, "fifty miles from nowhere if you take the short cut." We called it "The Bone" because for years and years in father's family there had been contention about it, until the others finally decided it was not worth contending over and gave it to poor father who had never contended and had never wanted it. When father died he left the Bone to me. I don't know why but I rather think it was his idea of a joke. I am sure he had never considered the taxes on it, which had to come out of my thirty dollars. Everyone advised me to let the taxes, and the Bone, go. For some reason I had not. So the Bone was still mine and the taxes for the year had been paid.

Besides these resources I had, in the bank, four hundred and eighty-nine dollars and ten cents. That was what remained of the six hundred dollars that fourth cousin Penelope Dell had left me when she died. I had spent the rest of it on my trousseau.

Pat had climbed up on the bed and was playing with father's ivory chessmen. I decided to ask his advice about a plan which had popped into my mind: "Pat," I said, "should you like to go and live on the Bone where thirty dollars a month would be a fortune instead of a pittance and where no one, ever again, could be beautifully patient about you?"

At first he was too busy trying to chew the nose off

of one of the knights to attend, but when I finally gained his interest his "Woo-oo!" with the dimple was enthusiastic and then, just to prove to me that he was tired of civilization, he threw the king on the floor and broke his crown.

That afternoon Pat and I went out to inspect the Bone. We got home late the same night so you see it is not fifty miles from nowhere; it is merely fifty miles from the city, fifty miles all going up, fifty miles closer to heaven. One doesn't think much about heaven, though, up here on the Bone. One doesn't need to. Earth, here, is all glorious enough.

Next day Pat and I bought a tent and a teakettle and other useful things, and packed our trunk and our trousseau and went to live on the Bone, in the tent, until the walrus, the carpenter and I could get our house built. And married brother, and Lotta, and friends of theirs and friends of mine wagged their heads dubiously, dolefully, and tut-tutted their tongues and said: "You can't do it." When the first man planted the first seed his relatives and friends all stood about, I am sure, and wagged their heads and said: "You can't make it grow. Nothing will come of it. You'll have to give it up." But the seed did grow and Pat and I did do it.

The carpenter I hired to help me build our house was not a real carpenter, any more than his fifteen year old son, the walrus, was a real walrus so, naturally, we

did not get a real house built. The worst trouble was that, quite a time before the house was completed, the carpenter changed his mind concerning the suitability of his vocation, and that was natural, I had changed my mind about it as soon as the house was begun. He decided that he wanted to go to work in a hardware store in the city. For weeks his soul yearned towards hardware. Whenever he'd drive a nail he'd stop and think how much more fascinating it would be to sell nails than it was to pound them. It was useless for me to point out to him the beauty and bigness of constructive work. He said he guessed by nature he was not constructive. It was a splendid piece of guesswork. Finally he left, and took the walrus with him and went to his hardware selling and I finished the building of our house, alone.

It was not fun. It was horny handed hard work and nearly neighbor came often to observe and jeer and seldom to help, though I paid him, gladly, whenever he would work with me for a while.

So that was why, when I should have been wearing mourning I was wearing "Can't Bust 'em" overalls. So that was why, when I should have been crying over a broken heart and a ruined future I was shedding all the tears I had to spare over a smashed thumb or a badly skinned shinbone.

A poet and a philosopher built our fireplace for us. I never did read any of his poetry, never did listen to

any of his philosophizing, but he said he was a poet and a philosopher so I suppose he was. Why he built our fireplace for us I don't know. He came by one day in an automobile and I asked him, please would he see whether he could find a builder of fireplaces, in the city, and send him out to build ours. And he said he built very good fireplaces himself, and would do ours for us, if I liked; and I did like, so he stayed that day and came up from the city other days and built it.

Before it was quite finished he asked me to marry him, and I said no, I couldn't, and I was sorry and thanked him just the same; and he said not to mention it, and went on and finished the fireplace building. Then he went away, before I had paid him for his work, and that was the last I ever did see of him. The fireplace is a very good fireplace. It draws well and never smokes.

That fall one other man asked me to marry him. He was an architect who had come up the mountain to fish in wee river.

Pat was in the house having his nap and I was out under the trees reading when the architect came around the yard from the back of perch-edifice and pointed an accusing long white forefinger at it: "What," he asked, "do you call that?"

"I call it perch-edifice," I answered, "the perch is for fun and the edifice for dignity."

"Very good," he said, "I was afraid that you called it a house."

"Oh my, no!" I protested.

"It looks," he ruminated, "rather like a river steamboat, and rather like a Chinese pagoda, and rather as if some architect had carried out his client's demands to the letter."

"The navicular effect," I said, "was gained by putting the porch up high, so that it could be in the tree-leaves, and the pagoda management was very simple: I just didn't saw all the boards off. I got tired of sawing."

"You!" he said, and laughed. I think he never did believe that I builded most of perch-edifice by myself.

Later he asked me to marry him. Not later that same day, but later along in the year. And when I told him that I couldn't, that I was sorry, that I thanked him just the same, he was not nearly so pleasant about it as the poet and philosopher had been.

CHAPTER FIVE

All of my family came home cautiously yesterday morning, pausing in the doorway to find out the state of my disposition before he ventured in: "Do you —" he began.

I shook my head: "' My heart is God's little garden,' " I assured him. " How is your heart, and how is Mr. Miser's? "

" Hungry," he answered, but he meant stomach hungry, not heart hungry, " and Mr. Miser has another cold and an earache and a grouch, so I went around by nearly neighbor's but he pretended not to see me and muttered something about ' gettin' shet of that thar varmint,' so then I came home. Seemed like this was a want-to-lead-a-life-of-crime day for everybody. Funny what a lot of difference it makes when you aren't around, Phyl."

The compliment was so dearly gratifying that I ignored it: " Mr. Miser has another cold and an earache," I exclaimed, " the poor man! What is he doing for them? "

" Swearing," said all of my family.

" A mere anodyn. Shall we take him down some cures? "

"Well—" said all of my family, "but I'd *like* to eat."

We ate. And then we went down the road and up the other road to Mr. Miser's house, carrying quinine for the cold and olive oil, to be heated, for the ear.

Originally, I am sure Mr. Miser was not intended to be a miser. He is not cut from the right pattern, the pattern from which typical misers are made. A funny little fat bantam of a man he is, with a pinky bald head like a peeled Bermuda onion and big round baby-blue eyes without a particle of craft in them, and plump, stumpy hands without a particle of clutchiness about them. All of my family and I have decided that he caught his miserliness somewhere, just as he is everlastingly catching cold, and has not been able to rid himself of it.

"It is just no use," so he greeted us yesterday, "a-buyin' shoes for kids unless you take the kids along, elseways they never fit. Never."

Mr. Miser is like that. He has a way of dispensing with preliminaries, a casual hospitable way of taking his visitors immediately into his thoughts, which has a charm of its own. He throws his mental door wide open and says: "Come in. The house may not be in order but I'll not keep you waiting outside while I arrange my how-do-you-dos, and so-good-of-you-to-comes."

"It surely is wiser," I agreed, "to take the kids along."

"My old lady," he continued, "used to go up town and buy shoes for the kids all around and bring 'em home and they never fit. Never."

We have known Mr. Miser for five years and this was the first time we had heard him mention his old lady and the kids.

"But," said I, "did you used to have a family?"

"In the past," said Mr. Miser.

"Oh," said I.

"A wife and seven or eight children," said Mr. Miser.

"Only," said all of my family, "don't you know how many — exactly?"

"Figures," said Mr. Miser with a prodigious sigh, "is of no consequence."

"But —" persisted all of my family.

I interrupted. He has a tendency toward argumentation which I thwart when possible.

"What has become of your family, Mr. Totenberry?" I asked.

"They was took off," said Mr. Miser.

"Off of what?" questioned all of my family.

"Off the scow," answered Mr. Miser, but he seemed to be growing weary of the subject, annoyed.

All of my family and I had heard much of Mr. Miser's life on his scow (we call them houseboats),

but never before had we heard of his wife and seven or eight children being taken off of it. It isn't much wonder that Pat persisted, so :

"Yes, but who took them off?"

"That," pondered Mr. Miser, with a great air of wisdom, "is a question. Some might claim one thing, some another. But I claims that they just fell. They was all drowned."

"Not all of them," I gasped.

"All," he insisted, "one right after 'tother. It were a sight, it shorley *were* a sight."

Fortunately I was still standing, near the door. I managed an excuse and went out through the door and closed it behind me,

A little later all of my family joined me: "Nice!" he reproved,— "coming out here and laughing by yourself because a man had his wife and seven or eight children drown all one right after the other. You said,"— sternly — "that you had finished being a fiend in human form for to-day."

"But it isn't true," I giggled, "you know it isn't. He just made them up and then he had to get rid of them. Of course he had his fingers crossed for 'King's Excuse' the whole time." It is a polite pretend of ours, all of my family's and mine, that Mr. Miser crosses his fingers while carrying on many of his reminiscent conversations.

"No," acquiesced all of my family, "I don't sup-

pose it was true, I guess he just kind'a got started, and — But, just the same, it isn't a thing for you to go laughing about, Phyl. If you read it in a book you wouldn't laugh. You didn't laugh, you hollered, when Jude hung the two little children and himself up in the closet. In a book you'd cry about it."

"Very well," I said, to appease him, "I'll put it in my book so that everyone who cares to may cry about it."

So, yesterday, was I bragging boisterously about my book. I suppose I had thought of a literary effort rather as I had thought of fudge candy: something to be cooked and stirred and flavored and then, to make it quite right, set away to cool. How was I to know that the cooling process is as fatal to book-making as it is to an Irish stew? Hot, red hot yesterday, my two chapters seemed to be delectable. Cold, quite cold this morning they are merely — stuff.

Right after breakfast I read my two chapters over carefully, and consulted the red book, and sharpened my pencil and chewed the point off. Then I read my two chapters over again, carefully, and consulted the red book, and sharpened my pencil and chewed the point off.

"'Smatter?" questioned all of my family, at last, looking up from the chess problem he has been trying to solve for the past month.

"You know our book?" I questioned back.

He did.

"Well, it is all done now."

"Done!"

"Finished," I explained; "you see, I've come to the end of it, and when one comes to the end of anything, then there is the place to stop." Just to prove it to him I read the two chapters aloud.

"Well," he said cheerfully, "it does rather seem as if you had come to the stopping-place, doesn't it? The trouble is you finished those love affairs up too slick and quick. You should have dragged 'em out."

"I'm not good at dragging out," I said, "especially not love affairs."

"It takes imagination," cribbed all of my family from the red book.

"I knew," I said, crossly, "that I couldn't do it at all if I did it properly."

"You wouldn't," said all of my family accusingly, "want to do an improper book, would you, old sport?"

"I am not going to do any sort of book," I replied, "not any." The best part of that is that I meant it. I am not.

"It does take imagination," repeated all of my family.

"Anyway," I persisted, "who am I to be writing a book when Gorky and Rolland and Powys are at it?"

"*I don't know,*" said all of my family, opening his eyes wide. I resented his manner. He seemed to be disclaiming, absolutely, all previous acquaintance with me.

"That isn't the retort proper," I said, "you should have answered: '*But supposing those men had said who were they to be writing books when Tolstoi and Hugo and Meredith were at it.*'"

"That's the way you do, Phyl," complained all of my family, "whenever you start an argument you take both sides of it at once and spoil everything." With this rebuke he returned to his chess problem and I have returned to my writing. Not a book! Oh, dear, no! These writings of mine aren't to be a book any more than perch-edifice is a house. No critic shall ever have an opportunity to point his finger at it, as the architect did at perch-edifice, and say: "What do you call that?"

Quite as if he had been peeking over my shoulder, right there, all of my family looked up from the chess board and asked: "What are you writing, then?"

"Words to fill the ledger. Prose. Plotless as a portrait, crazy as a kickshaw, if I like, and all of it color of pink."

"Well—" said all of my family.

"Well?" I prompted cheerfully, because he had seemed so uncheerful over his, "well."

"It is a pity about that book," he responded, "after we had planned to have one in the family, and — all. Pity it shouldn't get written."

"Do you know," I said, "I fancy that there are whole lots of books, living in the world right now, or perhaps I should say dying in the world right now, that would love it, just simply love it, had they never been written at all."

All of my family paid not one bit of attention to this remark of mine. He left the chess men and walked to the window and looked out at the rain-twilled day: "It does take imagination," he remarked, after a long while.

"Dear," I said, "I don't wish to seem fussy, but of late you have developed a most obnoxious, a most dull habit of repeating. You have made that remark about imagination over and over to-day."

"I was thinking," he explained, coming back to the table, "that I guessed I might as well just naturally write our book myself."

"Do," I urged, pushing the ledger and the red book and some pencils across to him, "do."

"Ye'a, I might as well," he agreed, "since it is raining cats and dogs and I'm nearly sure that there was a mistake in printing that chess problem. Nobody could make that white mate in three moves — four now. You try it, Phyl, while I begin on this book."

But I didn't try it. I despise chess problems; they make my mind feel inferior. Instead I sat and stared at the board and thought dully bromidic thoughts concerning pawns and people and kings and kismet, for awhile, and then I patched Pat's other trousers, and then I manicured my nails, and then all of my family returned the ledger. Here is the first chapter:

A MYSTERIOUS MOUNTAIN STORY

AUTHOR

MR. PATRICK WINFREE

Miss Phyllis Dev Venorn lived all alone in Oregon's green mountains with a young man. His name was Patrick. She was a beautiful young girl, very clean with white teeth — but of that later.

On the same mountains, at a distance lived a man named Jack Peters but known as wiley Jack but Miss Phyllis called him nearly neighbor because he was not a real neighbor. He was very old, over forty, but of Jack's real nature you will learn later.

He had a very red face and blue eyes and he was not very clean. On Sunday he put on a rubber collar sometimes. But one day when Phyllis was walking the Oregon mountains Jack jumped out from behind a tree and said: "I have you now!"

But Patrick, who in the meantime had been expecting some such sort of funny business jumped out

from behind another tree and with one well placed blow severed the clutch of the hand on Phyllis' throat and then Jack slunk away saying between his teeth and awful curses, "I will get even on him." Chapter Two.

"It has action," I said.

All of my family beamed.

I pushed the ledger across to him: "Go on," I said, "and write chapter two, and chapter three and —"

He interrupted with a noisy yawn: "It's awful hot in here," he complained; "why can't we go outside for a while?"

"But the book," I protested.

"It 'ud take so much time," said all of my family.

"Imagination —" I pondered. He looked at me with suspicion.

"Call it square?" I suggested.

And then we shook hands and went out to play.

CHAPTER SIX

To-day all of my family and I are going to court,—not law court, royal court,—and we are all excited about it. At least we think we are to be allowed to go and at least I am all excited about it. I suspect all of my family of faking some of his excitement to humor me. To tell truly, for the past number of months I have had reasons, at times, to suspect all of my family of humoring me. To be sure, as yet, my suspicions are merely suspicions. If I were positive, quite positive, that he were doing such a thing I should of course punish him severely: pull his nose, or bite his ears, or hold him and hug him for ten minutes.

But to return to our hoped for visit to royalty. This morning the whole big Oregon world is draped in white chiffon. No matter that nearly neighbor calls it, “fawg,” no matter that all of my family begged, this morning, to have it be the smoke from a furious battle: I know that it is white chiffon and that right behind it the King and Queen are preparing for their first reception of the year so that, after a while, when the curtain is lifted, they may be ready to stand out in all their glory and splendor to meet their

subjects and to receive their worship. Great rugged old Mount Hood, great smooth-lined, beautiful Mount Saint Helens, we do worship you, we Oregon folks; but, better than that, we love you because, in spite of your majesty, you are so mortal,—according to our moods we may greet you with a "Hallelujah!" or a "Hello!"—and loving you, of course we need you. There is a part of me, a shiftless hang-headed part of me that needs you and your Heaven-pointing peaks to make me aspire; there is another part of me, an arrogant chin-uppish part of me, that needs you and your aeons-old wisdom to make me humble. But to-day, this particular white chiffon day which makes one think, somehow, of a bride in her veilings, I do not want you to make me aspire, and I do not want you to make me humble, I just want to love you—lots. I think that is all I shall have time to do to-day, just love you, because you have been gone away for so long, in the gray over there. And when people come home who have been gone away for a long time one doesn't do anything at first but just love them. There is not room for anything else; not at first.

But all of my family is squirming about and looking at our caps on the wall, and since it is silly to sit indoors and write about things when one might go out of doors and be a part of them—I go.

And I almost wish that I had not. I almost wish

that I had stayed right here at home and continued to call a wet old fog white chiffon veilings because, to call a fog white chiffon I must have been in quite an exalted mood and, this evening, I am in a pilgarlicky sort of humor. I like that word, pilgarlicky. I found it once in a book, where it was quite as out of place as a tankard of beer at a tea-party, so I joyed over it and remembered it because I was quite sure that sometime I should need it. To-night I do.

To begin with, this morning, nearly neighbor called me an old maid. No matter about the circumstances. He called me an old maid.

I gasped and grinned, the sort of grin I am sure which provokes the question from children: "Ain't you afraid your face 'ull freeze like that?" and started to run away; and decided that probably the running had an attempted skittish effect, and sobered down to a dignified walk and remembered, violently, a comic valentine I had once seen labeled: "Old Maid" and the verse beneath it that rhymed old maid with wooden leg. In desperation I felt about and found my sense of humor and yanked it out and shook it until its teeth popped and said: "Wake up, you lazy no good! Get to work!" But it merely yawned and muttered something about having had its feelings hurt and went off to sleep again.

I consider it bad taste to talk about one's sense of humor but, right here, I am going to talk about

mine. When first I read Kipling's, "Oonts!" I had a vague sense of recognition. To my certain knowledge I had never met an oonts, and yet — and yet — And then, when I came to the line: "'E's a devil and a ostrich an' a orphan-child in one," my vagueness vanished, and with a suddenness illuminative I recognized — my sense of humor. A lazy, disorderly, revengeful old diddler, that's what it is, and if I knew worse names to call I'd call them. He weeps and writhes over Charley Chaplin; he roars with mirth over the death of little Eva and there is no good in him. Once he laughed at Ibsen — but no, some things must not be told.

Since my own sense of humor refused to work I appealed to Pat's: "Wasn't it funny," said I, "nearly neighbor calling me an old maid?"

"How do you mean — funny?" he inquired.

I let the matter drop.

But this evening I feel as if I had been standing on a ladder and nearly neighbor had advanced, lifted his too large foot, and kicked my ladder out from under me. I am tumbling, poiseless. So I think I shall get out my practical common sense and look it in the face,—ever an obnoxious performance,—and land myself, either on the ground or on my ladder.

What are the traditional attributes of old maids? They brag about their past suitors. So have I done,

just a day or so ago. They say they don't care to marry. So do I say. But I say it rather as I say I don't care to go to Guinea, because I have never been there and because I am very happy here. I think I say it geographically, not sour-grapishly. Yet—I don't know. If, sometime in the days, I should meet a man who is rather like a tall tree, and rather like Pat's grin, with the dimple, and rather like Barrie's books, and the least bit like the feeling I have for October, and not at all like any of those things but entirely like himself, then what? And is making up men, in your mind, an old-maidish thing to do?

I have looked at my face now for five minutes, in my hand mirror and I don't look like an old maid, and I don't feel like an old maid and I'm not an old maid. So now I know. I am rather a pleasant looking and feeling unmarried person. That's what I am. It wasn't the state that worried me. It was the title. Just any woman in the world, whether she'll own up to it or whether she won't, would rather be called an old—anything from doodle to dotard than to be called an old maid.

My other quarrel with the to-day's happenings is quite as pilgarlicky and much more practical. Right after luncheon all of my family made the distracting discovery that our supplies were getting low.

"Rice all gone," he announced, happily.

"We don't need rice," I assured him.

"And the tea."

"How fortunate," I began, "that we aren't Chinese —"

But he suspected me: "Yea, but the flour is most all gone, and the canned goods, and the prunes, and the — Of course," he interrupted himself to apologize, "I'm sorry about the musty marts of commerce for you."

"And glad for your ownself," so the words formed themselves, all ready to accuse, but I did not use them. It was true, so whatever was the use of emphasizing it and making all of my family squirmingly uncomfortable.

It is odd how one doesn't get used to things, unpleasant things, I mean. About every once in a long while the state of our larder forces me to go to the city a-marketing. It seems incredible but when I order by letter folks cheat, sometimes. Every time I have to go to the city all of my family is overjoyed. He likes to stay here in perch-edifice all by himself and be hermits and pirates and such sorts of objectionable people. It think it is mean of him. And I'll never get used to it. True, he is always quite as overjoyed when I come home again, but I got used to that long ago.

Instead of accusing I warned him: "I'm going to whine," I said.

"Go to it, old scout," he agreed. It is merely a part of the programme. I always whine when I have to go down to the city.

I whined. The city in March was detestable. I didn't have any clothes to wear. The old city smarties began to wear spring clothes in March and I never could buy my spring clothes until summer sale time when the city smarties were blooming in fall things. And I'd look dowdy. And I'd feel dowdy. And I supposed everybody would be sorry for me.

"Yea," agreed all of my family, "I suppose."

I was astonished. All of my family, usually shows sort of an instinct for tactfulness: "Only — why?" I asked.

"Maybe," he explained, "they'd think it wasn't nice not to be sorry for you when you were sorry for yourself."

Sometimes I suspect all of my family of being a philosopher, but I never humor him in it: "Wisdom?" I jeered.

"No," he disclaimed, "just saying."

I sat silent for a while, just thinking.

"Have you finished whining?" inquired all of my family.

"Quite."

"Then," suggested he, "let's go play."

And now it is dark time in the world. Whoever put the moon in place to-night dropped it hard, perhaps

because it was so big and heavy, and made it splatter stars all over the sky, and little furry clouds are scampering about, trying to lick them up, I think. I like you dark time; I like you fat moon; I like you tiny stars; I like you silly little greedy clouds; I like you all very much. Good night.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Oh, but I did have fun in the city! Enjoying every bit of it from the "canned goods" to the nice young man; from the library to Lotta; from the department stores to the dentist; from my tiled bath at the hotel to the pleasant, smutty-faced Italian who sold me prunes. All of it, every bit, did I enjoy, but most of all I enjoyed the fact that I did not have to live there. And I am quite sure that no one felt sorry for me because, first thing I knew, I was feeling sorry for everyone with a large impudent sense of superiority which may not have been at all pretty but which was very comfortable to carry about, especially when one's clothes were dowdy.

If anyone had told me, (I think I caught that expression from Lotta, but it does very well right here,) if anyone had told me last Wednesday morning, as I was walking to the station, that I should be forced to stay in the city three whole days and a piece of another one I am very sure I should have sat me down by the roadside and howled. But no one did tell me, so I enjoyed my train ride thinking how much I should enjoy my train ride home next day.

And at the hotel where I always go I engaged a

more expensive room than I had a right to afford for more than one night. That was nice, because I had the room, you see, and since the extra stay was forced upon me I didn't have to feel extravagant, I could feel "put upon."

I never stay with Lotta and married brother when I go to the city. I don't approve of visiting. They don't approve of me.

It was the dentist who decided that I should have to stay over. Always, when I go to the city I go to see the dentist. I tell myself that I go because of my teeth. Myself tells me that I go because his offices are on the twentieth floor. There is truth in the teeth, and truth in the twentieth floor, and all of my family would call it "an even break." But I do delight in looking out of those high up windows down at the scurrying ant folks, below. I know of nothing that can make one feel so lazily, languidly unimportant as looking out of twentieth-story windows. I regard those windows as a spree. I would not allow myself to look out of them every day, if I could. My dentist hasn't any chin, and he roaches his hair and uses perfumed soap, but just the same I am sure that he must be a very strong minded person to be able to indulge in those windows each day and remain a proper professional man instead of turning into a hobo, with a "What in the deuce is the use?" philosophy.

After I had left the dentist's I was still under the influence of my spree,—a "hold over" is, I believe, the proper term,—I felt that I needed a mental Bromo Seltzer, so I climbed on a street car and rode out into the suburbs to see Lotta.

Life, for Lotta, is chuck full of tremendously important things, though I think the lenses in her eyeglasses are made from the same material that they use in the making of microscopes. She can't see very far with them, in fact she can't see much further than the tip of her nose with them, so it isn't any wonder at all that the things which do come close enough for her to see should loom very large. But, after all, who am I to be slurring Lotta for a microscopic vision? All of my world is bounded by the Bone and filled with perch-edifice and Pat and me. I suppose my quarrel with Lotta amounts to the fact that the things which come under her microscope are not the same things which come under mine. If she chooses to say that the view from perch-edifice is like a postal card when I think it is like Paradise, why, truly, she knows more of postal cards than I can know of Paradise. I have forgiven her for that, long ago, and some day, when I have time to spare, I am going to forgive her for saying that Mount Saint Helens is like a big dish of mashed potatoes without the dish. Some day.

Lotta greeted me with a big warm kiss and said I

was so clever at fixing over hats,— that was a fixed over hat, wasn't it? — and I should shorten my skirt, they were wearing them very short and full this year, and for me to come right out into the kitchen — gas stove — nicest young man — asbestos finished — looked just like new — right next door.

At least that was how it seemed to me. I was dull about it. It took me some several minutes to get the asbestos finish, and the gas stove, and the nice young man who lived next door separated and then get them all together again. Straightened out it goes like this:

Next door there lived a nice young man whose business in life was selling an asbestos finish for gas stoves which made gas stoves look exactly like new. He had given Lotta a fruit jar full of the regenerating liquid. She had just finished applying it to her gas stove. She showed me the gas stove, right then, and challenged me to say that it did not look like new. I couldn't. It did.

That evening she showed me the nice young man and challenged me to say that he was not nice. I couldn't. He was. Very nice. There was not a thing about him from his dark tan hair to his light tan shoes which wasn't nice and which didn't look like new.

We played Five Hundred, conscientiously, carefully and politely for two hours. Then we played

the phonograph, politely, carefully and conscientiously, laughing at Harry Lauder, looking sorrowful over "I Hear You Calling Me," and "The Rosary," for another hour.

During the evening the nice young man asked me whether I had read Harold Bell Wright's latest novel and when I said that I had not he apologized for me very nicely and said that it must be hard to get books out in the country. He went on to say, though not in the least arrogantly that he, himself, read all the good books that came out.

"Good?" I questioned meekly.

"Oh, yes, indeed," he said.

During the evening the nice young man asked me whether I preferred Mary Pickford or Marguerite Clark and when I said that I loved each of them he answered: "Yet people should have preferences, don't you think?"

"Only," said I, "why?"

"Now I don't know —" said married brother.

"Well, anyhow, we won't *argue* about it," said Lotta.

During the evening the nice young man asked me what I did out in the country. They all, always, right straight through the button list, rich man, poor man, beggar man and the rest of them, ask me what I do out in the country.

"Play, mostly," I answered.

And when he discovered that I did not mean I played a musical instrument: "But of course you are joking about that," he apologized for me again, nicely.

"And work —"

"There must be a lot of work to do," approvingly.

"There might be," I replied, "if we did it, but we don't." He looked as if he were composing another apology so I went on, quickly, "And read —"

"Then," said the nice young man, eagerly, "you *do* read? And what, may I ask, is your favorite book?"

I remembered his opinions concerning preferences, and I wanted to be agreeable, so: "Well," I answered, with a degree of honesty at least, "it is sort of an even break between 'Walden,' 'Alice in Wonderland,' and the Bible. Not counting Browning's poems as a book. One can't lump poems so."

"I have never read —" began the nice young man, and then, hastily, "that is — the Bible of course. Sunday School. My people are Presbyterians —"

"Oh, don't," interrupted Lotta, "don't let's get talking about books and religions and things."

That night back at the hotel I wrote to Pat:

"Dear: I'll have to stay over until Saturday on account of the dentist. But don't worry about me. I am having a regular heck of a time. People are lots of fun. Your, Phyl."

Friday his answer came:

"Dear Phyl: I'm sorry about the dentist. I am glad you are having a heck of a time. So am I so don't worry about me either. Mr. Miser has two new black pigs. They are lots of fun. Yours, Pat."

CHAPTER EIGHT

Now that I am home again in perch-edifice with Pat and the big trees and a full larder and an utterly contented ego it does seem silly to waste time telling of my city adventures. Down there they seemed vividly interesting; up here the very trees turn up their twigs at them and quote, as did Mrs. Hawksbee, “ ‘ Ha-ow pahltry! ’ ”

About everything except my departure from the city they have done that; but when I described my departure to them I listened hard and away up in their tip-tops I was positive I heard snickers, whispery and rather solemn, but sure enough snickers. So I have decided that if it was silly enough for the trees to snicker about it must be silly enough to record.

The morning was blowsey and blowey and I arrived at the station blowsed and blown, my arms full of bundles and my mind full of just one thing, the delight of getting back to the Bone. So when the nice young man suddenly confronted me, trig and neat and all in brown, tapering a bit at each end, the only thought my silly mind could think was how very much he did resemble a brand new cigar.

He raised his hat elaborately and darted off to re-

turn in an instant with a largish loosely wrapped parcel in his hand: "I brought this for you," he said, and I fancied that he winked, very slightly. Then, before I had time to express surprise or gratitude or any of the proper emotions, he pulled the loose wrappings apart and showed me what he had brought, for me. It was a large brown bottle, labeled:

"OLD DOWN HOME BRAND

PURE

WHISKY "

My first feeling (of course my sense of humor deserted me entirely), was one of pure shock. I doubted my senses. The nice young man! Next I found myself being priggishly, formally offended.

"Thank you," I managed icily, "but of course I can't accept — such a thing, not possibly."

"But," he stammered, still proffering the bottle, "I — I — thought you'd like it."

I was furious. Like it! What right had that offensive person to go about thinking that I liked, "Old Down Home Brand, Pure Whisky?"

"You have been mistaken," I said, "I don't like it."

"But," he persisted, "have you ever tried this kind?"

Away down deep in me, somewhere, my sense of

humor began to struggle weakly, but I repressed it. "This," I said to it, "is not a joke. Insult. Odious. Other men who want to be pleasant to other girls bring candy and flowers, things of that sort. But he — He must be tough." I looked especially to see. He didn't look tough. He still looked nice and as good as new, but fearfully embarrassed and unhappy and uncertain. I felt a little sorry for him. Maybe he just did not know any better. Maybe his people,—though it did seem scarcely tenable, suitable,—besides being Presbyterians had been in the liquor business. Perhaps he had been associated with it since childhood, giving it away as presents. Maybe he meant to be kind.

"You see," I explained, "I — don't drink."

"Don't drink!" he echoed with an astonishment that was the epitome of insult.

I turned and started to walk towards the train. He followed me. I turned again. "Really —" I began.

His face was fairly knotted with perplexity. "It ain't meant to drink!" he said. "Stove polish! Or, more rightly, a neat, durable, sanitary, asbestos finish."

The train was beginning to move. I snatched the bottle from his hands: "Oh," I gasped, "I — I thought. I mean I do thank you. But — You see — Lotta's was in a fruit jar. I thought — fruit jars—" I called my last words to him from the platform.

"She *furnished* the fruit jar," he called back, pettishly, grievedly; "the ladies *always* furnish the jars. I didn't *have* a jar. I didn't —"

I found my seat in the car and began to laugh. Perhaps in all the world there is a more embarrassing sensation than that one feels when one is laughing quite alone and in public; but I don't know what it is. I tried to stop laughing. I could not. The more I sought to repress my giggles the more loudly they snickered out and burst, explosively. The large lady, sitting next to me, gave me not the slightest reason to suppose that my giggles and I were anything but wholly obnoxious to her. At last she could stand it no longer:

"You seem," she said, "to be very much amused."

"I am," I answered. It did feel like a fearfully obvious reply but I couldn't think of another.

"You seem to be," she repeated, emphasizing the "seem," unnecessarily.

"Oh, but I *am*," I insisted.

"You seem to be."

"I —" I stopped. After all conversations of that sort must end sometime. I looked up at her. She was looking at my lap. I looked at my lap. Completely uncovered, "Old Down Home Brand, Pure Whisky," confronted me and, of course, damned me in the eyes of the large lady.

I had an almost irrepressible desire to remark:

" 'To the pure all things are pure.' " It would have been so splendidly silly. But I realized instantly that I had been too silly, far too silly, as it was. Now I must be proper and practical.

"Have you a gas stove?" I inquired.

She moved as if to pick up her satchel.

"Because," I went on hurriedly, "this bottle is filled with stove polish or, more rightly, a neat, durable, sanitary finish for gas stoves. It does, really, make them look as good as new. And I haven't a gas stove, not up at my house, so I'd be very glad to give you this." I picked the bottle up and shook it invitingly. "You can put it in a fruit jar when you get it home," I urged.

She looked at the bottle and me with suspicion.

I could feel myself looking guilty.

"It is very nice stove polish," I urged.

She shook the bottle, looked at it, uncorked it, and smelled of the contents. "Well," she said, recorking it in a decisive manner, "well, I suppose I might as well take it since it is no good to *you*."

She spoke as if nothing in the big world would be of any good to me; nothing, from stove polish to Christian counsel. But perhaps, I consoled myself, that was merely her unfortunate habit of emphasis. What did it matter? What did anything at all matter? I was going home where everything was good to me. And maybe all of my family would

be waiting at the train, and maybe his face would be one wide grin, with the dimple, and maybe he'd say:

"Old scout, it's been rotten without you!"

And that is just what did happen, all of it; and Heaven is just at the end of the littlest trail and the city is a million miles away.

CHAPTER NINE

It is April month in the year, dear, moody, whimsical, cry-baby, cross-patch, turn-around-and-laugh-about-it month, and I love it best of all.

Nearly neighbor's fruit trees are in bloom, away down the road; almost a mile they send their fragrance to us. And I wish there were a part of me that was a thief, preordained, so that, as all of my family would say, I just naturally could not help stealing a few of the apple blossoms and bringing them home to put in my big green Grueby vase. But there is not such a part of me, so I have to be content with going to see them every day and imagining how they'd look in the green vase against the mat of gray blotting paper I'd put up behind them, if I had them.

White dogwood flowers have come to star the green of the trees; and shining saucy dandelions have come to star the green of the grass; and white butterflies have come to dance in it all; and birds have come to laugh because of it all; and most of the world is tangled in sunshine, and rainbows are the reasons for the tears.

The other morning, when I had risen very early to see the sunrise, I met nearly neighbor who had

risen very early to get his milking done; and my joy of the world was so effervescent that morning that some of it bubbled over and talked about itself, even to him.

"It beats me," answered nearly neighbor, "how you can see all this here," he indicated all this here by a wave of his hand which included chiefly his barn, but which he meant I think to include the miracle of spring, "and not think God sent it."

"But," I protested, "I do. At least, I think he hasn't sent it, exactly; I think he has come himself and *brought* it."

And nearly neighbor grunted and went on, and I was sorry that I had spoken so, for it is sayings of that sort from me that have convinced him that I am an unbeliever. The trouble started long ago when I told him that, instead of believing in God, I believed with God.

"And by what right," he asked, "are you a-settin' yourself up with God?"

"But my God is a friendly God," I protested; "He *likes* to be set up with."

"And my God," he said, "is in the Bible."

"Only, surely,"—and I meant no least bit of irreverence,—“surely you are not content to leave Him there?"

But nearly neighbor walked away and would not listen to me any more.

All of my family and I have been enormously busy this month, making our gardens and cleaning our house. Several times each year we clean house according to the methods of that most excellent house-keeper, Thoreau. We "rise early;" we "set all our furniture out of doors on the grass;" and if we don't exactly "dash the water," nor use white sand for scouring and a broom for scrubbing, we do obtain the same clean and white results that he did. Too, as he did, we enjoy seeing our furniture all out on the grass, though we know very well that he would not enjoy it, seeing our furniture, I mean.

He would stop and thank God that he could sit and stand without the aid of a furniture warehouse; and surely, surely he would be quite unable to tell whether our things belonged to a rich man or to a poor man.

I have a few pieces of fine mahogany,—they belonged to mother,—a tall pier-glass, a large library table, a spindle-legged dressing-table, some candle-stands, and two chairs. The remainder of perch-edifice's furniture, except our steamer-chairs and the hammock, is made mostly from packing-boxes covered with burlap or chintz. Our bookcases are built in, four long shelves on each side of the fireplace. Fortunately for us, our furniture except occasionally out on the grass, is entirely democratic. The mahogany dressing-table is not in the

least snobbish to the chintz-covered apple box which I use for a seat in front of it. The old chairs rub arms very cozily with the steamer-chairs; the library table stands graciously on the rug, never reminding it that it is made of blue and white rags; and the pier-glass reflects our home-made magazine rack quite as clearly and cheerfully as it reflects the candle-stands, made, I believe, by Heppelwhite.

Truly perch-edifice's great big living-room is a loving room. Even Lotta, though she can't see why in the world I won't put a ceiling in it, instead of allowing it to, "peak right up to the roof and show all those untidy rafters," does admit that it "seems nice and pretty someway." And the architect was most pleasant about it.

"It is a home," he said, "this room, permanent, wholesome. After the rooms I have been in lately, period rooms, new art rooms it is — a — an — an epic to a roundelay, and — But you understand me of course?"

I didn't. The trouble with the architect was that he never could quite think his thoughts.

"You mean," I suggested, "that it is rather like bread and butter after French pastry."

"Not at all," said the architect. We never did agree on our metaphors, the architect and I.

About our gardening I am not as enthusiastic as I am about our housecleaning. Perhaps because

housecleaning is a thoroughly practical prosaic occupation and, while one is at it one is quite content to be practical and prosaic. But gardening seems to be the sort of occupation about which one should wax romantic, or at least fanciful, and I can't. Not about vegetable gardening. It is grubby work, the digging and the weeding and the hoeing and the killing of bugs. Such a fuss for mere things to eat always seems to me to be unprofitable. We put more into our vegetable gardens each year than we ever get out of them.

Flowers, of course, are different. I work happily and gladly over them, because as I weed and spade I can paint pictures worth painting and smell odors worth smelling: a great red-headed poppy; the odor of petunias and cinnamon pinks — like that. But whoever in the world would care to paint a picture of a dish of boiled beets, or to smell the odor of — string beans? Not that I mean to pose as esthetic or extramundane, busy a-priding myself on incorporeity. Not any. I enjoy eating, but I think it should be a sort of casual business at best.

Lotta spends long beautiful summer days, almost all of her long beautiful summer days, putting up (or is it down, she says down?) fruit for the winter months. Just to eat. Lotta misses sunsets to bake pies. Just to eat. Eat! She regards restaurants as immoral and delicatessens as dens of depravity. "I

like to know what I am eating," says Lotta, firmly; and then she always closes her mouth in that odd way she has.

"Of course," I agree with her, "it is nice to know what one is eating, and yet — there are things I had rather know."

"You are not a wife," Lotta answers. And that, of course ends the argument. I know of no more effective argument stopper than the stating of some wholly obvious, utterly unrelated fact. Only, sometimes I wonder why Lotta does not say: "The world is round," or: "Your nose is pug," just by way of variety.

If ever I am a wife I am going to Lotta and say, first: "I am a wife." And then I am going to follow up that statement with a long string of alliterative bromidioms concerning cooks and companions, mates and meals, preserves and a knowledge of politics, souls and sauces. Not in a muddle like that but quite tididly. And, when I have finished, Lotta will probably say: "You are not as old as I am."

Now I must go and wash the double boiler and make a custard. Inconsistent? Yes, but custards are inconsistent things; at least mine usually are. This custard is for Mr. Miser. His cold, as he says, has "got worse on" him. Unless I fix dainties for him to eat he won't eat anything at all.

CHAPTER TEN

We carried the custard to Mr. Miser yesterday, all of my family and I, and Mr. Miser welcomed us with this remark :

“ When a man claims to set store by the good book, then I claims he ain’t got no right to cuss a person out for quotin’ it on him. What ’ud I say to him? Just this, says I: ‘ The Lord has give and the Lord has took away.’ Says he to me words in no ways fit to repeat in the company of ladies. Drat! I’m a poor man. I got no ready money to lend to him to buy more.”

“ On the scow, was it? ” questioned all of my family.

“ No, sir, right here in my own shack, not less’un three hour ago. He cussed me out, says he —”

“ But,” I interrupted hurriedly, “ who cussed you out, Mr. Totenberry? ”

“ Pedeson, he says,—”

I interrupted again: “ But what is the matter with Mr. Pedeson? ”

“ Ornery,” said Mr. Miser positively, though with a certain air of regret.

All of my family evidently thought that it was time

to come to my rescue. He has a knack of getting to the heart of things: "What," he said, "did the Lord give and take away from who?"

"Pedeson claims," replied Mr. Miser, with his usual caution, "that two of his cows is up and died on him."

Here, indeed, was tragedy. All of my family and I walked home very solemnly, very quietly down the trail.

"Cows," said all of my family, "seem like such *big* things to die."

"And *two* of them," I agreed.

"Maybe," said all of my family, "it does seem kind'a like we should try to do something about it. Don't folks always do things about dying? Flowers? Like that?"

"Only," I pondered, "flowers — cows —"

"Well, they are just as dead as anything," said all of my family.

Still I could not reconcile myself, quite, to the idea of carrying flowers to nearly neighbor. Two dead cows, and flowers, and nearly neighbor were not, somehow, reconcilable. But my conscience and all of my family combined in making me uncomfortable about entirely ignoring the tragedy. So when we got home and saw what was left of the custard in the kettle on the kitchen table I suggested that we take that up to nearly neighbor. It seemed more suitable. All of

my family approved, but mildly: "Custard —" he pondered, as I had pondered flowers.

But we put it in our prettiest willow-ware bowl, and set the bowl on a lacquer tray with a blue and white doily underneath, and all of my family seemed reasonably satisfied.

We took the long way around to go up to nearly neighbor's so that we should not have to cross wee river on the log. We are adepts at log crossing but with the custard we thought best to eliminate all risk. We had not been through the long way around for over a week and since our last trip the Oregon grape, in the open space just beyond the first clump of vine maples, had bloomed. We tried to be decently decorous about it, remembering our missions, but it was rather difficult. They were so astonishingly beautiful, those great yellow clusters of flowers, massing against their shiny dark green leaves, so bright and so softly fragrant.

"Flowers," said all of my family, wistfully, "are nice and — suitable. The yellow would nearly match the custard, Phyl." Things that "match" are weak points with me, and he knew it.

"No," I answered, "not these. You see, Pat, the leaves, the green leaves are so stickery, prickery. Stickery prickery things don't seem suitable — Or do they, to you?"

"Maybe not," agreed all of my family, but he sighed.

And then, right then, we met the blue flowers. I stopped and squealed and frightened all of my family so that he nearly dropped the custard. You see, those blue flowers were bran new flowers; never before during all of our seven years on the mountain had we seen any flowers like them. And they were so very lovely, long stemmed graceful things, about two shades bluer than the bluest June sky. All of my family set the custard tray down on a stump and then we ran to greet them.

They lacked fragrance. It was disappointing. All the while we ran I had been thinking of the excitement of a new odor.

"They don't—" began all of my family, raising his head.

"But they are so blue," I interrupted hastily, because it did seem impolite to criticize, right on first acquaintance, "so blessedly, brilliantly, sent-down-from-Heaven blue!"

"They match, exactly, the bowl and the doily," said all of my family and I, weak woman that I am, succumbed. Probably, I thought, nearly neighbor had not seen them, and they would interest him, of course; and their bright blueness would surely cheer up his unhappiness; and they did match, they did match per-

fectly. All of my family wanted to pick a big bouquet of them, with the young huckleberry leaves for green; but I insisted on just two long sprays, to decorate the tray.

We planned to come home that way and pick whole lots of them, with the green, to take home and put in the copper bowl; and then we went on to nearly neighbor's.

Our timid knock was greeted by a growl to "Come'n," and our entrance with a "Now what'a you want?" Quite as if we were used to calling every day, a-wanting something.

"We brought you a custard for your supper," I said, and had my lips all fixed to say that he was quite welcome or something of that sort, but I didn't say it because what nearly neighbor said next was: "You git out of here you two!" and another remark which seemed to have to do with varmints but which I was too dazed to hear, rightly.

"Custard," I repeated, "for your supper." And then the silliest thoughts concerning custards commenced to skip through my mind. Custards, after all, were made from cows' milk. Could nearly neighbor be thinking—evidently all of my family's thoughts were pursuing the same course, because: "But it is all cooked!" he gasped.

Nearly neighbor rose to his feet. Always he has seemed to me extraordinarily, unnecessarily tall, but



I grabbed all of my family's hand and ran. "You'd better git," I heard. *See Page 85*

to-day his towering height impressed me as it never had impressed me before.

"A-bringin' me," he roared, "on a tray, the very flowers that poisoned my critters from the eatin' of 'em. Killed 'em dead. And you bring 'em here to me. On a tray!"

If only my silly thoughts had stayed with the custard, so that I might have had wits enough to stand still and explain that we were innocent; that we had had no idea concerning what had killed his cows. But my silly thoughts did not. It must have been because nearly neighbor emphasized the tray, as he did, but I could think of only one thing: John the Baptist's head on a charger, and the picture in the Bible which showed, clearly, that a charger was a tray.

I grabbed all of my family's hand and ran.

"You'd better git," I heard nearly neighbor shout, menacingly.

We got. We surely did. In fact we got all the way to the blue flowers before we stopped running; before we said one word. Then: "How dreadful of us!" I gasped, and to my own and to Pat's horror I began to laugh. I couldn't stop. I hope it was nervousness and excitement that caused my mirth. I hope it was.

"I'm certainly s'prised at you!" said all of my family.

"I'm sorry," I gasped, "cross my heart I'm sorry."

"Ye'a," jeered all of my family, "you sound sorry."

But I was sorry, sincerely sorry, and to prove it I began to pull up the blue flowers by the roots.

"They are too pretty to be poisonous," said all of my family, wistfully, "and then — the copper bowl."

"We'd appreciate them," I said, "in the copper bowl. And we mustn't. It would be wrong. Poor nearly neighbor. Two cows, quite dead. No, we must destroy them, utterly."

We did. We pulled them all up by the roots and scattered them about and went home, feeling exactly as if we had participated in a massacre.

For the past few minutes I have been trying to persuade myself that I did not hear all of my family talking to someone in there in the living room. I find it impossible to carry out the self-deception any longer. I do hear voices, and I must go in. Supposing,— Oh, dreadful;— that the nice young man has carried out his threat,— or should I say fulfilled his promise? — to come up here and pay us a visit.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

He hadn't. When I went into the house yesterday afternoon I found all of my family, his nose wrinkled up with worry, talking to nearly neighbor. It was his first call on us and in the maze of my astonishment it seemed to me for an instant that he was dressed in bright blue from head to foot. He was not, of course; he just had on his best and brightest blue necktie and in his button hole (shades of the departed cattle!), he wore a large spray of the pretty poisonous blue flowers.

Said I, far too effusively, "How do you do?" and then, to Pat, "Why didn't you call me, dear?"

"Yes," said nearly neighbor, looking at Pat accusingly, "and that's what I'd like to know. He told me, ma'am, that you was out."

All of my family squirmed miserably: "I thought —" he began.

And I thought it was best not to hear what he had thought so I interrupted and rescued him: "Of course," I said, "and I was out."

"'Course," agreed all of my family, "else how could you have come in?"

"I have came," said nearly neighbor, ignoring my

explanation and Pat's logic, "I have come to proffer a apology."

"No," I protested, "please not."

"I might'a knew you didn't aim no insult —"

"Truly we didn't know —"

"On course you didn't," agreed nearly neighbor, pleasantly.

I fought about in my vocabulary for something to say. Nearly neighbor's pleasantries seemed to act as narcotics towards my conversational ability; dulling it, deadening it.

"Mr. Mi — Totenberry has a bad cold," contributed all of my family.

"Totenberry," said nearly neighbor, "is a lazy on-healthy, miserly old varmint."

"No, surely," I objected.

"Well," said nearly neighbor, "for them that sets store by him." He finished his phrase off neatly, with a period, so it must have meant something but I could not imagine what.

"I note," said nearly neighbor, next, "that you carried him a puddin'."

"He is ill," I said.

"But no posies," said nearly neighbor.

"No posies," I echoed, "you see Mr. Mi — Totenberry doesn't care for posies."

"I do," said nearly neighbor, "and *thar's* the difference."

I caught myself squirming about in my chair, exactly as all of my family does when he is embarrassed.

"And I'm here to say," continued nearly neighbor, "that I never et anythin' more tasty than that thar puddin'."

I replied conventionally.

"I fotched on the dish and I done up the mat," said nearly neighbor.

"He means," translated all of my family, "that he has returned the dish and washed and ironed the doily."

Stupidly I stared at all of my family without one thought of reproof. I was wondering whether his knowledge was instinctive and, if not, however he had acquired it.

"Well," said nearly neighbor, "ain't that what I said, young man?"

Whereupon the young man slipped from his chair and sneaked out of the room, basely deserting me.

"You should not have troubled to done up the mat," I said.

"No trouble, ma'am. It were a right purty mat." He smiled. I did not like the smile: it was a sort of sickly silly looking and curved rather insinuatingly. A foolish notion of mine, no doubt, but even yet I do not exactly like the memory of that smile.

Again I replied conventionally.

"I judge," said nearly neighbor, "that you are right handy."

"Yes," I said, and corrected myself, "No."

Nearly neighbor rose: "'It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.'" He roared it, rather, and he looked very tall and grim standing so, but I thought he was going, so I stood, too, and was just trying to decide whether I should attempt an answer to his quotation, or say something about his departure, when he sat down again.

"That," said he, as if challenging me to deny it, "is from the Psalms." He pronounced it, "Sams."

"We were both sorry about your — affliction," I said.

Again he rose: "'She openeth her mouth with wisdom and in her tongue is the law of kindness,'" he roared.

I thought he had made a mistake about sitting down the first time so, again, I stood.

"And that," said nearly neighbor in a more normal tone of voice, "is also from the Sams." He resumed his chair.

I walked to the window. I felt fearfully warm and fuddled and uncertain. The conversation, if it were a conversation, seemed to be whirling dizzily away in the distance beyond me. I could not follow it, much less catch up with it and understand. I supposed that nearly neighbor was attempting to entangle me in a

religious controversy but, like Lotta, I did not want to argue. The sun had gone and left a great pigeon-grey and silver curtain in the west, and over its edge little gold-eyed clouds came peeking; rowdy, runaway little clouds who wanted one more glimpse of the funny earth, I think, before they scampered back to Heaven. For the first time in all my life, I truly believe, I looked at what the sun had left for us to see and thought — that it was past dinner time. I turned from the window:

"Will you stay and have dinner with us?" I invited. At least I meant it to sound like an invitation but deep down in my heart I knew it was a hint as to the lateness of the hour.

Nearly neighbor replied that if I meant supper he guessed he might as well.

While I was preparing dinner Pat came in and said that our last order of books had come and that the new book by Wells was chuck full of funny pictures; and when I expressed incredulity he insisted that they were, awful funny. Mr. Shaw in pajamas dancing about with a cup and saucer and a bun, and —

"Do hush!" I protested, "when you see I have to peel potatoes!"

"Kind'a rotten," consoled all of my family, "that nearly neighbor should have to show up on a book day."

Dinner was scarcely a success. All of my family

quite forgot to eat he was so fascinated by watching nearly neighbor. I, for a reason which politeness forbids me to mention, lost my appetite. Nearly neighbor's one remark, during the meal, was that he liked his victuals *cooked*. That remark was concerning the salad.

After dinner nearly neighbor stayed, and stayed, and stayed, and stayed, and kept on staying. Like that. For an hour, perhaps, our conversation was spasmodic, in the distressing sense of the word. It twitched, it writhed, it wiggled about piteously; it fainted and fell down and then, bravely and in spite of its agony it rose up again and made a fresh start; until, at last, completely worn out, completely exhausted, it executed one last convulsive effort and died.

At first, just at first, I was glad. It had tried hard, it was tired, and now it was out of torment. But all of my family went to sleep, and the clock began to boom instead of ticking as it should, and the very lamp seemed noisy. A fearfully aphonious sensation came over me. I wondered whether I could speak. My throat had an odd contracted, frozen feeling. When I was a child I used to wake up in the dark, sometimes, and be frightened wondering whether I had gone blind; and then I'd get up and stumble about in the dark until I had found the light and turned it on, to be sure. Tonight I could not find the light and I was stumbling, tumbling about in the dark. I opened my eyes and

realized that, almost, I had been asleep. Nearly neighbor was sitting opposite; all of him had an intensely vertical appearance. He cleared his throat. I jumped.

"See here," I said sternly to myself, "this won't do. Not any. You are developing nerves. Say something. Anything."

"I can't," whined my vocal organs.

"Try," I commanded. Begin with "a" and go right down the alphabet. There is a system. Use it.

"Apples," I said, aloud, and jumped again, "apples, do you think they will do well this year?"

"Don' know," said nearly neighbor.

"Bees. Did you ever consider keeping bees?"

"Naw," said nearly neighbor.

I decided to skip "c" and "d" because I could think of nothing but cows and death for them (odd how they came together); but I did "e" very nicely with Easter; and finished off "f" with the fungi growths on the logs; and was trying to evade goitre for "g" when, quite as if he had been following my alphabetical efforts nearly neighbor rose and said he guessed he might as well be getting on.

"Two of them," I thought, "in one sentence. How neat."

"There are the chores," I agreed, and wondered how I could have missed that for the "c."

"I'll come again," he said.

"But of course," I answered, "do."

"To-morrow, mebbe."

I had a blessed inspiration: "Only," I said with a smile which I tried to make deprecatory, "you see, to-morrow is Wednesday." It was a simple statement of a fact, nothing else, but it worked.

"Well then," said nearly neighbor, "next day, mebbe. And," he went on, "come Sunday, mebbe. I'll hitch up the mare and take you buggy drivin'." He smiled that same silly half insinuating smile. I hated it. "We'll not take the kid," he finished.

"Always," I objected, "Pat and I spend our Sundays together. And the mare works all week so it seems mean not to allow her to rest on Sunday. Besides, I really don't care for buggy driving."

"Sensible," approved nearly neighbor, "oncommon sensible for a woman."

After he had gone I drew the bolt on the door, for the first time since perch-edifice has been home. Then I plumped down in the hammock, exhausted; and then, for no reason at all I began to cry. At first I just sniffled and whimpered a bit; then I let go and howled.

All of my family wakened instantly. He had never heard me howl before and he was frightened: "Old sport," he kept saying, "where does it hurt? Where does it hurt?"

"All over everywhere," I blubbered. "I'm tired."

Too tired, I think. I'm tired of everything. I'm tired of perch-edifice. We'll go down to the city to live, I think, Pat. Reason — I'm tired."

It was high treason. Of course all of my family could only stand and stare with his big round eyes.

"You say something," I commanded, "you say something or I'll — I'll —"

He said something. He opened that heart-shaped baby mouth of his and emitted a great round booming oath.

For an instant I lay still, listening to it echo up among the rafters. Then I sat up and looked about the room; and the room looked back at me, tranquilly, a gentle harmony of shadows, except for the soft halo of light shed by the reading lamp.

I got up from the hammock and went over and sat down by the table and reached for the pile of new books and put them in my lap. Then: "Dear," I said to Pat, "your last remark — you remember?"

"Mr. Miser —" began Pat, some apologetically, some defensively.

"Yes, I know," I said, "and it was very nice under the circumstances. But it is one of those things that can't be used too often. Rather like our fire extinguisher, I think. Splendid, if the house were burning. Silly to go squirting it about when there was no fire."

"In case of emergencies," said all of my family, "but otherwise, not?"

"Exactly," said I, "otherwise not." Then with a great big yawn for peace and contentment I opened "Boon, The Mind of the Race."

CHAPTER TWELVE

“ Well,” Lotta said to me the time the peanut man asked me whether I’d rather hold the horse or go back and pick up the peanuts; “ well, I don’t wish to seem critical but for a well-bred girl you do have the most extraordinary experiences. You seem to court them ! ”

It was no use at all to explain to Lotta, that day, that I had neither courted the peanut man nor his horse; that I had just happened to meet them at the crucial moment when the runaway horse had been caught; that the peanuts were scattered about for blocks and blocks; that the man had no rope to tie his horse and so, of course, it had to be held. The man could not afford to lose the peanuts, so they had to be picked up. And there were only the two of us in all that flat sunny suburb so, naturally, I did have to do one or the other : hold or pick. I chose holding the horse. I held it for more than an hour. Lotta was cross about it when I got home. Not cross because I had held the horse but, as nearly as I could understand, cross because I had stopped holding it. The Stackpoles came along in their automobile and saw the horse and me, and stopped and tied the horse with a rope

they had, and took me home in the machine. The Stackpoles were the bright particular social star to whom Lotta's wagon was hitched at the time. She said I had spoiled everything. I hadn't. Next day they invited — But all that is old stale stuff and I started to tell of the extraordinary experiences I have been having lately.

There are three of them: a pleasant one, and a medium one, and a distinctly unpleasant one. I'll tell the pleasant one first, on the same principle that I always eat all the goo out of a chocolate cream first, just in case.

To-day, for a reason that has to do with the unpleasant experience, I was feeling particularly wild and woolly and reckless so I succumbed to all of my family's urgings to play hunting wild animals in darkest Africa. It is a game I am not at all fond of in my milder moods, because I always have to be the animal and get stalked and chased and shot and captured. Strenuous. But yesterday I felt strenuous, so I put on my corduroy knickers and all of my family and I hied us around the mountain to where the woods are especially thick and unpenetrable and Africaish.

I insisted upon being an elephant. Always I have a predilection for elephants which all of my family despises, the predilection I mean. He says I merely want to be an elephant because he has to give me a further head start when I'm an elephant, as elephants are not

supposed to run fast. But he finally humored me, and closed his eyes and counted two hundred by fives while I skipped out into the woods.

I must have made an exceptionally good skip because all of my family could not find me. And the further I went into the woods the less I felt like an elephant; the less I desired to be stalked and shot or stabbed or stuck; the more I wanted to wander, quite alone, among the big trees and think thoughts. I even allowed myself to stop and hug, in an entirely unelephantine manner, some of the biggest straightest trees. I like to hug them, they seem to lend some of their strength to me when I do, but I have denied myself the pleasure ever since the day nearly neighbor caught me at it and called me an old maid.

After a time I came to a particularly inviting hemlock tree; in fact it spread its big gnarly limbs low and invited me right up into them to rest for a while. I had walked through the thickest woods by then and was out on the edges of the other side, and I was rather tired so I decided to accept the invitation. After all, I thought, as I curled up cozily on the soft moss-mattressed limb, all of my family and I could not be quite positive that elephants never did climb trees. If he did catch me I'd explain to him that I was an original elephant, athletically inclined, and that it was a much greater stunt to capture a tree-climbing elephant than it would be to capture a merely earth-walking elephant.

But perhaps I did feel rather guilty, just the same, because when I heard Pat come crashing through the brush on the other side I commenced to make monstrous elephant noises so that he could not say I did not play fair about that. Of course I didn't know what sort of noises elephants do make, so I made "grur-ur-ur-urs," which sounded very much as an elephant looks, stopping to reason with myself between "gurs" and tell myself that I must not be silly, that I was simply playing a child's game with a child. The trouble is my imagination has never grown up, retarded development or something of the sort, and when I come to the minute of capture, playing wild animals, I always feel exactly like a wild animal being hunted and I get so scared and excited and mad. I began to tremble, but I kept on "grur"-ing, and when I heard all of my family right under me and I shut my eyes waiting for the, "Bang-bang!" or the, "Ss-est!" that was going to shoot or stick me. For some reason all of my family didn't say it. It made me cross. I thought he might do it and get it over with. I opened my eyes and looked down at a man, a perfect stranger, with a gun, a real gun, not a wooden stick.

"Oh," I squealed, "I'm not real —"

"I was sure you were not real, Peter Pan," he said.

"I mean elephant," I said, trying so hard to collect my wits and be sensible and succeeding, of course, in a supreme bit of silliness.

"Do you know," he said, "I felt all the while that you were not a real elephant?" He laughed, the pleasantest sort of a laugh; and he had the pleasantest sort of a face, that just matched the laugh. In fact, all of him seemed to be a thoroughly pleasant sort of man, so I decided to explain. Usually I eschew explanations, I don't approve of them; but when folks are thoroughly pleasant it makes lots of difference.

"We were playing wild animals in Africa," I said, "all of my family and I, and always just at the crisis I get so excited, rather as one does just before the curtain goes up at the theatre, and then, you see, when the curtain fell down it was rather hard for a moment, I — didn't, I mean I couldn't —" I managed the explanation very badly, all chuck full of stutters and stammers, like that, but he seemed to understand.

"What an entirely likeable family you must have," he smiled.

"Oh, he is," I agreed, "but you see he is only one, just a little boy, named Pat."

"I see," answered the perfect stranger and sat down on a stump opposite.

After that we talked for a little while, not at all sensibly, entirely fantastically, one of those delightful tom-foolish conversations that are so much fun. And I noticed that he had navy blue eyes, and rather light hair, and a large nose that held itself up nicely at the end without a suspicion of a hook to it, and a humor-

ously inclined mouth and plenty of chin but not a bit too much. The general impression of his face was mild and kindly and intellectual,—he had glasses in front of the navy blue eyes,—and then I noticed that his wide smile was a bit like Pat's grin. And then, or about then, I noticed a star or two stuck into the sky and I said I must be going straight home.

"Home!" he exclaimed. "But you live in that tree, don't you?" And he pretended to be shocked and disappointed when he found that I didn't live in the hemlock tree.

We walked back through the woods together. He had come to camp on the mountain for the summer, and his tents are in the clump of vine maples on the long way around to nearly neighbor's. He stopped there and I came on to perch-edifice.

All of my family had been home some time, it seemed, and he was glum, gloomy grumpy glum.

"'Sabout time you were getting home," he scolded. "Where you been?"

"Oh,—out and around," I answered.

"Well, I ate," he said, "I couldn't wait all night."

"I'm glad you did," I replied.

"Ye'a," said all of my family, "you seem pretty glad, but wait until you hear bad news."

"Pat," I commanded, "if you have any bad news you eat it, too. I'm not going to listen to bad news this evening."

"You'll find it out soon enough so I may as well tell now. There's a camper."

And I may as well tell now that our experiences with campers have not been lovely experiences. Usually they call Pat "Son," and last summer a — a person who wore khaki and diamonds together asked me what I'd charge to do their washing, by the week. As a rule I don't approve of the practice of lumping folks into classes, but campers seem particularly amenable to lumping, mostly under the letter "o," so: Campers, as a class, are omnipresent, overbearing, obtrusive, officious folks, with ornery offsprings.

"Camper," repeated all of my family, "you aren't paying any attention."

"I am so," I protested. "I was thinking. I saw him."

"A real old geek, with glasses?"

"No, the one I saw was quite young."

"There must be two of 'em," said all of my family.

And that is all there is to the pleasant experience; and I don't know exactly why it was pleasant, but it was.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The medium experience happened before the world turned around into May. About then all the bright yellow-headed dandelions turned into white heads. I've wondered whether it was a coincidence about the dandelions.

The nice young man came up from the city to see us. He brought his sister with him. His sister's name is Kitty, Kitty Mitchell, and she is the prettiest thing, outside of the flowers, that God ever did make, I think. It would be quite as possible to try to describe a rose, petal by petal, and expect to have something said when you had finished as it would be to try to describe Kitty Mitchell, bit by bit.

Her hair is September gold color, and part of it ripples and waves and part of it, around her face and the back of her neck, twists into soft baby-like curls. Her eyes are big and earth-brown and her complexion is most like apple blossoms of anything I know, and her mouth is poppy red and her teeth are as white and even as poppy seeds and nearly as tiny. She is rather tall and very slender and entirely exquisite. There! I feel quite as if I had described that rose by saying: "It is pink and shaped something like a cabbage, with

leaves as thin as tissue paper piling up and overlapping."

A girl as lovely as that does not need to be anything else, so I didn't mind that Kitty was not anything else but lovely. Though that is not quite accurate. Kitty was something else. Kitty was sad. I supposed, at first, that it was an unhappy love affair at the least. Before she went home she told me that she had a soft corn and it hurt.

Roy,—the nice young man,—because he did not know the reason for her depression, I suppose, was not sympathetic:

"Aw, come out of it, Kit," he urged.

"I can't," she sighed, and then, to me: "Men never understand, do they, when a girl gets down-hearted?"

"Don't they?" I asked, but it seemed to be the wrong answer for she sighed again, and:

"But then you are quite boyish yourself, aren't you? I suppose living right next to nature like this a person would not get downhearted."

After that she kept talking of living next to nature. She used such a lot of words about it: "wildness, freedom, liberty, natural, frankness." Those and others all mixed up rather indiscriminately, and somehow it did give me a fearfully uncivilized, unmoral, undressed feeling. Sandwiched in between those feelings I had another one, no less uncomfortable: vaguely

I felt that she was trying to get something said and just missing it each time. I am not good at hints. We never use them, all of my family and I, so I don't know how to treat them very well.

Before they left, however, she dispelled the last feeling, dispelled it entirely: "Do you know," she said, "I have a good notion to promise you a visit."

"Of course," I managed my manners, "do come up — often."

"No," she said, "I mean a real visit. I get my vacation in June and I have a good notion to come up here and spend the month with you. I don't care what people say." And then, because I must have hesitated, "I'd be *willing* to pay for what I cost extra," she said.

Someway that seemed to settle it. By the time I had finished refusing to allow her to pay anything it was all decided that she should come, on the tenth of June, to stay a month.

All of my family was cross as two sticks about it. "Old butter-in," he said, "why that wasn't even manners, Phyl!" He had formed a huge dislike for her, right away, because she called him, "little boy." He is very finicky concerning appellations, is all of my family.

"But she is so pretty," I protested, "think what a joy to have her about, to look at."

"She ain't pretty," he insisted, "she's too even. She'll just spoil everything."

Now that I have finished telling it, I wonder whether I should call their visit an experience. Maybe not. Maybe it was just something that happened. But how unusual for folks to invite themselves to visit one for a month and remark that they don't care what people say. I wonder what she meant by that statement, anyway?

But I am quite sure that the next thing I am going to tell is an experience. Quite sure.

After the visit which I detailed last month nearly neighbor did exactly as he threatened to do: he came the next Thursday evening, and then he kept on coming evenings, every other one, right straight along. At first, as Kitty would say, it made me "downhearted." Fearfully. Then I talked things over very sensibly with all of my family and we decided that it was worse than silly, nearly sinful, for us to allow one peculiar male person to make life almost unbearable for us. So, on his fifth visit, I introduced him to a pile of books, carefully selected, and then I sat down and read, and so did Pat sit down and read.

Nearly neighbor didn't read. He sat and watched us read. We kept resolutely on. He stayed until half past nine, his usual hour for departure, and left, as I supposed then, offended and hurt. I was sorry because he was hurt, and glad because I was sure he would not come again.

He came the next evening. He brought with him a

mouth organ. He knew three pieces: "Turkey In the Straw," "Good-by, Little Girl, Good-by," and "Nellie Gray." I won't try to describe that evening. Nobody could. The noise was not so terrible, but he did work so hard with his arms and his legs and his hands and his feet and his forehead! And he thought he was entertaining us, being agreeable. It should have been funny. It wasn't. It was sad. Quite sad. All the while I sat and watched and I had to be so ashamed for him. It is harrowing, being ashamed for folks who are not ashamed for themselves. Distressing. Depressing. I wanted to do something kind for him, to make up to him for himself. I got out the chafing-dish and fixed some fudge. He wouldn't eat it. Said it was "wimmin's truck."

But the great God of music must be a pitiful God because late that evening, nearly neighbor's mouth organ broke with a squeak and a squeal. He told us not to worry, he thought he could fix it; but he couldn't, I suppose, because the next time he came he brought with him a checker board. He had evidently decided that we were the dullest of folks and that, if there was to be any sort of entertainment, he would have to furnish it.

He and all of my family played checkers. Pat had never played before. He does rather well with chess, but checkers seemed to baffle him. Nearly neighbor

has a particularly strident laugh, and each time he'd jump one of Pat's men he'd use that laugh.

The next evening they tried chess. It was a failure. Nearly neighbor called the knights "horses," and concentrated his entire attention on them. "Someway," he said, "I can't seem to take no int'rurst in none on 'em but the horses." Too, he insisted upon jumping with the pawns and when all of my family declined, firmly, to allow that he said he guessed it was all right for them that took to it but, he speaking for himself, couldn't see no *use* in a game where nothin' but the horses could jump.

When he had gone all of my family threw himself in the hammock, rather as I had thrown myself on the occasion of nearly neighbor's first visit: "Oh, what," he demanded, in a tone of utter despair. "What is the matter with everything?"

I knew how he felt. I longed to comfort him as he had comforted me, but it seemed not wise: "I don't believe anything is the matter with everything," I said, "but I do believe that something is much the matter with nearly neighbor."

"What, do you suppose?" questioned all of my family.

"I have no notion."

And I didn't have any notion, and I kept on not having any notion, until last night when nearly neighbor

stalked into the room,— Pat was out in the garden,— handed me a great bunch of clumsy snowballs and said: "Ma'am, I have come to proffer the holy bands of matrimony."

I was dull. I didn't understand, not any. I thought he must mean a book, or a new musical instrument, so: "Thank you," I said, and looked about for it.

"When," said nearly neighbor, "should it come off?"

"Only," I said, "off — of what?"

"The date," said nearly neighbor, sternly, "name it." Then he smiled that silly, hateful, half insinuating smile.

I began to back towards the door. For some time I had been mildly suspicious that nearly neighbor was losing his wits.

"Now, now," said he, crossly this time, "no call to be coy. You and me is past shilly-shally. Name the date."

I had heard that it was wise to humor mad people. "The second of May," I said, and kept on backing.

"But," said nearly neighbor, "that's to-day."

"Yes," I agreed, "that is the date."

"Better make it to-morrer," said nearly neighbor.

"Yes," I agreed, trying to back more rapidly without attracting his attention to my maneuvers, "yes, make it tomorrow."

I can't tell, intelligently, just what did happen next.

He smiled again, and started toward me, and then I felt his great paw-like head on my arm, and there was something about "coy," and a "kiss," and then I pulled away and ran out into the garden and grabbed Pat.

"Old scout," he gasped, "what is it? What is it? Your freckles are all sticking out!"

"Nearly neighbor," I managed, "in there. Quite mad. He didn't, but he —"

"I'll fix him," said Pat, seizing the hoe and marching off before I could stop him.

My legs wrinkled right up under me and I sat down in the radish bed and listened to my own teeth chatter, until all of my family returned, hoeless and very stern.

"Phyl," he accused, "he says that you promised to marry him to-morrow; that you wanted to marry him to-day, but he wouldn't."

"Mad," I groaned, "I told you! Quite mad."

"Well, I should say he is," agreed all of my family, "he is just naturally hopping mad. He says he has no use for such coyness and that if he hadn't thought you were too sensible to act like that he'd never started courting in the first place, and that for half a cent he'd back out of it now, only he has wasted so much time courting."

That one word, courting, was like a loose end sticking out from the tangle of my wits; it seemed to

offer at least a possibility of getting things straightened. I seized it and, very slowly, I was able to unravel the mess and get my thoughts wound neatly on a spool. They came out smoothly, right straight through the "holy bands," the setting of the date, and all. I rolled over, down into the radish bed, and gasped and gurgled.

"Don't *do* that way," said all of my family.

I could not answer him.

"Phyl, old sport," and there was a suspicious quaver in his voice, "I—I guess you kind'a scare me. You act—like like a fit—or something. And you're smashing the radishes. And then—marrying nearly neighbor—"

I sat up. "Dear," I said, "it is all a mistake. But we could never in this world explain to nearly neighbor so, I think, we'll have to—lie a little. You go into perch-edifice and tell him that I am a weak hysterical woman. Tell him I have fearful fits, if necessary. Tell him I have thought it over and changed my mind. That I can't marry him. Not possibly."

All of my family was gone a rather long time. When he finally came back: "What did he say?" I questioned.

"I think," answered Pat, with a wrinkle of worry in his nose, "I think he prayed, but I'm not sure.

He just naturally did thank God for an awful lot of things, Phyl."

"Such as?" I prompted.

"Such as delivering him from women folks, and I think he thanked God for giving you fits, but I'm not sure about that; but he thanked God for letting him know before it was too late, and then — well, I forget the rest, but he told me to go to the devil and he went home."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

I did love March, and I did love April, but I do love May the best; she is such a lovely mysterious lavish lady, come straight from the orient to us.

When I told the perfect stranger how I thought about May, it troubled him, some.

"May," he said, and, "oriental?" and shook his head.

"What then?" I asked.

"A young girl," he said, "very young, from England, preferably, strong and lovely and pink and white."

But I would not let him have it so, not May. I said he might have April from England, though I did think that was mostly because of Browning, but that May must be from the orient.

"I can't think of her as buxom, and pink and white," I insisted, "reason, she isn't. She is a dark-eyed, slender oriental princess, decked in royal purple and gold and ivory." And to prove it I showed him our lilac trees, all smoky purple, great masses of them, poignantly perfumed, and I said, "Persia." And I pointed to the wisteria, draping perch-edifice

with its grape like clusters of purple, and said, "Japan." And I showed him the purple iris, waving their little flags all over the mountain, and said, "Japan," again, but he said, "Germany." I was rather cross about it. I would not have iris coming from Germany, so we compromised and agreed that at least they seemed to belong to Japan. And then I took him into the deep woodsy places and showed him the purple and gold violets, and ivory trilliums, and anemones; and proved to him that May must be purple and gold and ivory, not pink and white and blue.

We disagreed again over the golden glow that is sprinkling everywhere. He insisted upon calling it Scotch broom. And I insisted that it was golden spangles, made to fasten on the dresses of dancing girls. "Don't just look at it," I said, "but stop and listen and you can hear the tinkle." And he stopped and listened and fibbed and said sure enough he could.

"Not broom any more then?" I said. "Here May has brought great showers of gold and told us to help ourselves with both hands if we like, and be rich, and you go about calling it — broom."

"Is it May's gold," he asked, "that has made you so rich?"

"Oh, we aren't rich," said all of my family, "Phyl's only fooling. We're pretty poor. 'Poor

as church mice,' Aunt Lotta says, but then we don't mind a bit. We kind'a like it."

"Exactly," said the perfect stranger.

I don't know what he meant by that. I wonder.

The perfect stranger is the camper, (there weren't two of him, two campers I should say,) and he isn't a perfect stranger any longer, but for some reason I do always think of him by that name. His right name is Matthew Macelwayne. I like his right name. It matches and is solid sounding.

It is odd that I should have thought him young, that first day up in the woods when we met, because he surely is not young. It is odd that Pat should have thought him old, because he surely is not old. So now you know. He is a young forty-five; perhaps a very young fifty. The trouble is, I think, he feels much older than his age. He seems young and he feels old and that is a pity. Sad. I rather think his nephew who is coming to spend the remainder of the summer with him is why he feels old. I don't know why he seems young. He just does.

We met him, all of my family and I, down by wee river the very next day after the elephant episode. He was fishing. We spoke of the weather, and the fish, and then all of my family and I went on up the river. Pat was going to fish and I was going to sit on a log and read my new book, the volume

of Rupert Brooke's poetry. Unfortunately, quite soon I read the — I can't call it a poem, the thing, about sea-sickness and, after that of course I couldn't read Brooke any more that day, so I sat and watched the little silver bubbles come scurrying out from beneath the log; some singly, some in pairs, some in clusters, sliding along over the smooth water down to the rapids. Sometimes a single bubble joined another bubble and they went on together; sometimes a double bubble or a whole cluster of bubbles merged into a single one; sometimes a great prosperous self-sufficient bubble just skimmed out from beneath the log and then burst, for no reason at all; sometimes a little straggly bubble went straight on, all by its ownself, and reached the rapids and rode them and went on down the stream. Usually the bubbles burst when they came to the rapids, but not always. It was fascinating, watching them, hoping that one would win out, fearing that little married pair would not, and being glad if they did.

Of course I compared the bubbles to people and of course I compared the stream itself to God. And my thoughts, in a bit, began to tangle so I spoke them aloud as I always do when tangles bother.

"It doesn't exactly make the bubbles," I said, "but when they come they are a part of it. And it doesn't break them, either, but when they do break they aren't gone, they are just a part of it again. Only,"

—and this is what troubled me,—“the broken bubbles go into the rapids, and then they help make other rapids, to break other bubbles and that, some-way, doesn’t seem just fair. Perhaps,” I went on, “the understandable part is the hell of it.” But it seemed wrong and crooked, so I stopped thinking aloud, stopped watching the bubbles and looked up. There, right on the other end of the log, stood the perfect stranger. I was startled and I jumped.

“It must seem to you,” he said, “that I—how shall I say it?—have a most obtrusive way of materializing suddenly.”

“Not at all,” I said. It did seem exactly like that to me.

“It is these confounded rubber soles,” he apologized.

Because he had spoken of materialization; because I still had not straightened my thoughts from the bubble tangle; or for some such because I did not understand until later that he meant shoe soles. And because it did not seem formal enough to start discussing souls with a perfect stranger I asked him about his fish. He had no basket, no string of fish, no twig of fish, so: “Where are your fish?” I asked.

“To be sure,” he said, “fish,” and sat down on the log beside me quite as if he had answered me intelligently.

His next remark was amazing: "What," he said, "is the hell of it?"

I had forgotten about my soliloquy so I simply sat and stared at him and wondered whether, in spite of appearances, this pleasant seeming person was tough.

"I shouldn't have heard," he went on, "but I did. You said, just now, emphatically, that something was the hell of it."

I didn't want to tell him about my fancies concerning bubbles and good and bad, again it did not seem formal enough, so: "Please," I said, "let's not talk about hell."

So we didn't. We sat there on the log and talked about 'most everything else though, and the perfect stranger, even when I showed him the bubble people, never quoted the *Rubaiyat* once. Not that it is a habit of his to quote the *Rubaiyat*. It isn't. That is the point. So many people, instantly the conversation wanders into the here and the there, start quoting the *Rubaiyat*. I was glad he didn't. I told him so.

"My dear child," he said, "I am a dull old man, but to quote that book to you would be as inappropriate as — as — a cancan in a dew wet clover field."

"Only," I said, "what is a cancan?"

"No matter," he answered, and then because he

saw the determined dictionary look in my eyes, I suppose, "I'm a muddler with figures of speech but you — are the clover field."

I didn't like that, much. It sounded rather too rural and merged too closely to that despicable word, bovine. But I let it pass because it never does seem polite to argue about one's own self.

Perhaps the perfect stranger was not quite satisfied with it, either, because as he and all of my family and I were walking home he turned to me and asked, just of a sudden:

"What are you, anyway?"

I hesitated and all of my family, as usual, came to my rescue. Very literally too, as usual: "Oh," he said, "she's a girl, and a feminist, and a socialist, and —"

"Ist, ist," I interrupted, "no need to say 'em, you can hiss 'em, Pat."

I interrupted because I was rather embarrassed at having all of my labels dragged out and pinned on me. But I was rather glad that Pat had spoken so, just to show the perfect stranger that I was something besides, something different I should say, from a clover field.

He laughed, not a rowdy laugh but a pleasant crepitating little chuckle. I supposed he was laughing about my labels so I determined not to notice. He kept right on doing it.

"What," asked Pat, after waiting a decently long time for a cessation or an explanation, "what are you laughing at, Mr. Macelwayne?"

"Shall I tell?" he asked, looking at me.

"Shoot," said Pat.

"Well, then, I was laughing because I was pleased. And I was pleased because a feminist and a socialist, such big ists, should lisp so delightfully about it."

"Kind'a fresh, I think," was Pat's decision when we reached home, "making fun of people's infirmities."

"Is lisping an infirmity, do you think, Pat?"

"Well, of course," said all of my family, "but you don't really, old sport. At least not much. Just when you kind'a get excited you get your 's's' mixed up with your 'th's,' but that's all."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The perfect stranger's nephew, Anthony Carrer, is coming to-morrow. All day to-day the perfect stranger has been stewing. I believe he has said fifty times that he hoped Tony would like it, that he hoped Tony would stay. Once he varied it with an almost wistful: "I do hope you will like Tony, Miss Winfree," and another time, "I wonder whether you will be as kind to Tony as you have been to me? I wonder whether you will help me to keep him here?"

"But," I said, "even if Mr. Carrer does not care for it up here, you can stay, can't you, Mr. Macelwayne?"

"I am afraid not," he answered. "You see, the whole point of me being here is to keep Tony here with me. I came on ahead to get things ready for him. He hates a fuss. Getting settled. Won't put up with that sort of thing."

Then he asked me if I would come down to the camp and look things over and see whether I thought everything was all right.

If Navajo rugs, and a great wide hammock, and a revolving book-stand, and easy chairs, and real china,

and a victrola with hundreds of records, and box mattresses to sleep on, and eider down quilts,—a whole auto-truck load of things from the city,—can make a camp all right, then that camp was surely all right. I was disgusted, some, and I am afraid I showed it, for the perfect stranger began, immediately, to explain.

"Tony is not used to discomforts," he said, "he would not stay if there were discomforts. He'd go back to the city. I couldn't keep him here."

For the first time Mr. Macelwayne did seem rather old to me. He was fussing so. And he kept repeating himself so. And he seemed nervous and tired.

"But," I asked, "is your nephew an invalid?"

"Oh, no," he denied, "no." But then he modified it with a "not exactly."

"Why," I asked next, "have you so many beds? Four? Is someone coming with your nephew?"

"There's a Jap boy," he explained, "he should be here any time now, coming on a motor cycle. And then I'm not sure—Tony may want to bring his man. I hope not—"

"Your camp is quite the most elaborate, scrumptious camp I have ever seen," I said, "and now I must be running home. I have Pat's other suit to clean—he got frightfully grubby to-day—and then I have a small washing to do, and dinner to prepare.

But the camp is quite perfect. I am sure Mr. Carrer will think so too."

Then I ran home, feeling kind'a queer. It wasn't that I wanted such luxuries but they, and the Jap boy, and the possible "man" did make a difference. Before, the perfect stranger had seemed just folks, like us, cooking his own meals, cleaning his own fish, washing his dishes, and throwing out the dishwater. I had never known a man who kept a valet, never. And I supposed I looked like it and seemed like it; exactly the sort of girl who had never known a man who kept a valet. Western men don't, much. I began to wish, desperately, that nearly neighbor had not offered me the "holy bands" of matrimony. It made me seem so much less nice. I began to wonder whether, after all, I was rather that sort of person, the sort whom nearly neighbor would think he had a right to ask to marry him. Then I began to think of mother's family tree and there, right there, I stopped with a bang.

"Phyllis Winfree," I said to myself, "people have to be pretty low their ownselves before they have to try for eminence by climbing their family trees to go poking about in the branches hunting for dukes and lords among their great-greats."

When I got home I told all of my family that I wanted to lead a life of crime so he was very oblig-

ing about helping me with the washing. He put in too much bluing, but he didn't mean to.

I decided to iron a few of the pieces this evening and, just as I got well started the perfect stranger came. Pat called to me from the living room and I called back for Mr. Macelwayne to come right out, that I was busy. I was ironing one of Pat's nighties and I scorched it some, right then.

Mr. Macelwayne sat down on the kitchen stool and watched me. I hate being watched, when I work, but I kept right on like a life-sized laundry.

"Don't," he said, "hold that iron up to your cheek that way, you'll burn yourself."

"It is the way to tell whether they are hot enough," I said, snapped maybe. I hate to be bossed when I am working.

"Spit on your finger and then hit the iron with it. It will sizzle if it is hot enough. That's the way to tell."

"I don't *want* to spit on my finger," I answered.

He did not insist. He changed the subject: "I hope," he said, "that Tony will like it up here."

"But why shouldn't he?" I asked.

"He should," he answered, and sighed, "he should."

The sigh made me sorry; but it seemed politer not to notice it, so I went right on ironing.

"You see," he continued, apologetically, "I only had one sister. She was a little bit of a sister. She had only one child. Tony. He is all I have." He did not say it sentimentally, nor quivery, nor quavery. He just told.

"Have you had him long?" inquired all of my family with deep sympathy in his voice, quite as if "him" were a disease.

"Long enough," answered the perfect stranger, "to make a mess of things."

I had frowned on all of my family, a terrific, threatening frown, and he had caught it with its full measure of disapproval, so he had slid from his chair and sidled out of the room.

I finished Pat's nighty and began on some napkins.

"I could do those square things very nicely," said Mr. Macelwayne.

"I am sure you could," I agreed.

He laughed: "You speak to me exactly as you do to all of your family," he said.

"Sometimes," I answered, "it seems to me that you are rather like."

"Sometimes," he said, "it seems to me that Pat and Tony are rather like. But seriously, Miss Winfree, do let me iron some of those square things. I am sure I could do them much faster."

Of course I only laughed at him.

"Much faster," he persisted.

"Why faster," I said, "instead of better?"

"I'll confess," he smiled, "my motive is selfish. I don't want you to have to iron tomorrow."

"I'm afraid I'll have to," I said, "but why?"

"The first few days," he began, hesitatingly, "it was altogether impudent of me — The first few days will be the hardest, the quiet — all that. I was hoping rather that maybe you'd have time to play. Of course — couldn't — didn't think of intruding —"

Perhaps it was the dim light in the kitchen; perhaps it was the way he was perched up on the stool; I don't know. But somehow, right then, the perfect stranger didn't seem like a grown up; not any. He seemed like a little boy, tired some, sad some, and one wanted so much to be good to him.

I chucked the ironing into the clothes-basket and pushed the irons back on the stove and said: "Let's go out on the porch."

At first, when we stepped out on the porch, neither of us said anything. It is very hard to talk in the face of an ordinary sunset, even when one is expecting it, and there was a most extraordinary one, and a surprise besides: just a great feathery flame-colored wing, dropped by some careless angel, I am sure, all alone in a smooth grey sky. Clear from the west of the world to away over there in the north of the world it went, a big graceful curve of Glory, with its Hallelujah echoing back from the lake.

"Sort of irons the wrinkles from one's soul, doesn't it?" said Mr. Macelwayne, at last.

I turned and looked at him. It might have ironed the wrinkles from his soul, but it hadn't ironed away the worry lines from his forehead. That, it seemed to me, was to be my job. I stopped looking at the sunset, stopped thinking sunset, and tried to think of something, smoothing, soothing. And then I found what seemed to me to be an inspiration. It was not, but it seemed so, then.

"I'll tell you," I said, "what we'll do, we'll have a spree in perch-edifice for Mr. Carrer, tomorrow evening. Pat and I haven't had a spree for months, not since the night after Lotta left, so we'll enjoy it, and — and I feel exactly like a spree," I finished lamely because, instead of the worry wrinkles smoothing, they got deeper and deeper in Mr. Macelwayne's forehead.

"A spree?" he questioned. Just that, nothing more.

"We'll have it at dinner time," I went on. "Really they are always fun. We'll dress up perch-edifice, and ourselves, and —"

"The only trouble is —" he objected.

"What is the only trouble?" I asked, not seeing any trouble at all.

"Well —" he hesitated, "the wines — all that."

I was miffed. "Of course," I said, "it might seem

dull to you and Mr. Carrer, it probably would. Only — Pat and I and whoever else there was have always had splendid times without any wines and all that, as you say. We don't need to get woosey to have fun."

"Dear child," he laughed, "the entire trouble is that so often you and I speak different languages. I think a spree would be entirely delightful. Do, please, proceed with the plans for it."

I thought he had seen that I was miffed and that, now, he was just trying to make up and be polite. I remembered the splendors of their camp, the Jap boy, and the rest of it, and I felt, of a sudden, fearfully puerile; quite as the girl in white muslin and blue ribbons with the single old gold locket,—the one in all the stories, you know,—feels when she goes to the ambassador's ball.

"I think," I said, "that the spree is all off."

"And I think," he said, "that I am going to explain."

He did. He explained all the mystery about Tony. He didn't tell about Tony, he explained about Tony so that, when he had finished it was hard to realize the ugly truth beneath all the woven embroideries of his explanations. The ugly truth was that Tony had been a drunkard. Just that.

Oh, there were many reasons why Tony had been a drunkard: he had never had a mother; he had married young and his wife had died when their baby was born;

later the baby had died; and he had had much money to spend; and people had always liked him; and,—and and, and and. Maybe excellent reason for a man to turn into a drunkard,—who am I to say?—but most of them seemed to me like such very excellent reasons for a man not to turn into a drunkard. Surely he could not have cared a whole lot about his baby because, right after his wife died, he went away and left that baby; went all the way to South America. But when the baby had died, then he cared enough to start drinking again. I tried not to be mean about it, I did try, but all of Mr. Macelwayne's explanations sounded so much more like silly excuses than like reasons.

"Only," I asked, once, "all this money that he had to spend? Didn't he have to take up some of his time earning it?"

"Well,—no," Mr. Macelwayne hesitated, "you see, I —"

I saw. But I didn't say anything. There was not anything to say; so I just sat and watched the great wing turn from red to gold.

"From first to last," said Mr. Macelwayne, "it has been largely my fault."

I couldn't bear to keep still another minute: "Do you," I asked, "get joy out of thinking that way?"

"Joy! But—dear child!"

"Because if you do," I went on, "I wouldn't spoil

it for anything. It's wicked, spoiling folks' illusions when they get joy out of them. I knew a widow once who thought she was heartbroken. She wasn't. Not any. She had hated her husband for years, and she loved wearing mourning and having the life insurance. But it would have been wicked to tell her that she was not heartbroken. Being heartbroken was her chiefest joy in life."

"I assure you," he said, a bit stiffish, "that I don't get an iota of joy from the fact that I am largely responsible for the wrecking of Tony's life."

"Then," said I, "you listen here. I rather think you may enjoy the agony a bit, but you are much too nice to be sentimental. In the first place, Tony is thirty, you say. No one's life can be wrecked at thirty. Not possibly. I could go on now with a lot of fancy figurative talk about boats and sails and captains and anchors and things, but I won't. Too obvious. Obvious, also, that you didn't cause the death of Tony's father, wife or baby. So that is not your fault. As for you supplying him with money, that probably means that Tony got drunk on expensives instead of cheaps; that he got taken home in a taxicab instead of being picked up by a patrol wagon, on the street, and taken to jail."

"Fatalist?" he inquired.

"Indeed not," I denied, "just a sensiblist. If Tony hadn't had sorrows that he needed to drown in

drink, then he'd have found joys that he needed to drown that way."

"If Pat should turn out badly," he asked, "wouldn't you blame yourself?"

"Not any," I answered; "I'd blame Pat and his great-greats and let it go at that. If I needed to blame at all. I'd rather do something more active. I don't approve of blaming, much."

"I am sorry," he said, after a too long silence, "that you feel so about Tony. I had hoped, greatly, that you might like him."

"I will," I said, "I do."

"And will you try, a little, to help him?" he asked.

I thought it over for a while. "Only," I said, then, "none of this seems quite fair to him. Going about behind his back asking folks to help him. Supposing he doesn't want to be helped, what then?"

"He does want to be helped," said Mr. Macelwayne, "and he is trying to help himself."

"That's different," I said. "How is he trying to help himself?"

"He has put himself under the care of a physician. He is coming here to spend the summer with me, at least he is going to try to."

Helping himself! Getting a doctor and running away from temptation. I couldn't think of one thing to say but, "Oh." I said that. It was entirely inadequate. Much I wanted to say something else,

something pleasant and encouraging about Tony, something friendly, and feminine and — comforting. But I could not. So I said, "Oh," again with a slightly different inflection and waited.

The glory went out of the sky; the Hallelujah in the lake was hushed; and we sat silent. Each minute I could feel the perfect stranger growing more and more disappointed with me. I hate to disappoint folks. I hate it. For the first time in my life I wished that I were a gushy sort of girl. The sort who could lean forward in her chair, and look soulful, and put her hand on a man's arm and talk about the inspiration of friendship, and the influence of good women, and the beauty of pity and that sort of stuff. But I knew I'd bobble it if I tried. I knew I should probably be able to manage something about as beautiful as: "Oh, please don't worry! Someway or other we'll buck him up into a man," so I didn't try.

Mr. Macelwayne stood up: "I've been an insufferable idiot," he said.

"Not insufferable idiot," I protested.

But he wouldn't argue about it. He said good-night and he went home. I wish Tony weren't a drunkard. I wish he weren't.

"Old sport," said all of my family, right then, "you just naturally have an awful disagreeable expression on your face. Did you know?"

"Pat," I answered, "when folks tell you their

troubles don't ever try to show off and be sensible. Sensibleness, applied to troubles, is as inappropriate as — as — a cancan in a dew wet clover field."

"Wisdom?" said all of my family.

"Wisdom," said I.

"Ye'a, but what is a cancan?"

"If you tie one can to a puppy's tail," I answered, "a wicked, wicked proceeding, that's a can. And if you tie two cans, that's a cancan, doubly wicked."

But I don't feel silly. I feel dreary, and dull, and dowdy and depressed, any number of disagreeables that begin with "d."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

When I woke very early this morning, and heard the raindrops jumping on the roof I was as sad as could be about it. Usually there is nothing I like better than a rainy day in May; but this morning, try as I might I couldn't like it, because I knew how disappointed the perfect stranger would be.

I sat up and poked my head out of the window: everything was washed all clean and spicky-span; the air was delicious and away from the other side of perch-edifice the lilacs were sending their perfumes to me. It did seem mean, stingy, not to welcome the day and tell it that I liked it lots and throw it a kiss.

"And that," I thought to myself, "is the trouble with knowing people. If I had never met the perfect stranger, never heard of his nephew, I'd be all glad this morning." And then I began to wonder whether, after all, friends were worth while. And then something inside of me got up and yelled, "Selfish!" at the top of its voice, and I reached out my hands and caught some of the rain, and washed my sleepy eyes with it, and jumped out of bed.

It was too early to waken all of my family; too early to start fussing and clattering about with break-

fast; so I put on my knickers and my sweater and cap and went for a walk. I can't put on white paper, with black ink, the wonderfulness of this morning's walk in the wet green woods. I don't need to. It is mine to keep for forever.

Coming home I met a man from the other mountain going to town in his wagon, and he said: "Good morning."

"Isn't it a good morning?" I answered.

And he smiled and said that it was. I like to meet pleasant folks, pleasant as he was.

When I reached home the clock said I had been gone two hours. It seemed incredible. But all of my family, little lazy, was still snoozing away. So I hurried into dry clothes and cooked a scrumptious hot biscuit breakfast for him, to make up to him for what he had missed and what I had had in the woods.

During breakfast it began really to rain, hard, so Pat and I decided that Mr. Carrer would never drive up from the city in that storm.

"I'm not so awful sorry, either," said all of my family, darkly, as he got out the box which contains his invention (a curious contrivance that looks to me rather like a collapsible step ladder but which, when completed, is going to revolutionize the entire fishing industry), and went to work on it.

I tried to be "awful sorry," but it was good not to have to bother with tidying perch-edifice, nor wash-

ing the breakfast dishes. It was good to stretch out in the hammock in my coziest, oldest kimono and watch the fire in the fireplace and pretend that, in just a few moments, I would begin to read the pile of newspapers that had been collecting and that I had been evading for the past four days. Later, of course, the dishes and the dusting must be done; later I'd put on my best brown serge with the red tie, just in case; later there was the basket of unironed things, all — later. I wonder why it is that in order to extract the full amount of pleasure from lolling laziness one has to have ever so many things waiting which should be done?

I heard all of my family daring a fish to try to get through that, if it could; and then I wondered a bit because the fire flames were turning into nasturtium flowers and it seemed unusual; and then I heard the perfect stranger's voice saying no indeed, not to waken her, and I sat up and rubbed my eyes.

"Gee, whiz! Phyl," disapproved all of my family, "but your face is red." I thought it was mean of him. I suppose I scowled. I was so sleepy.

"Sometimes," warned all of my family, "she wakes up cross."

I opened my eyes. There stood Mr. Macelwayne, looking entirely uncomfortable and embarrassed. There stood another man, leaning against the mantel as men do in magazine illustrations, looking entirely

comfortable, unembarrassed and amused. I hate to amuse folks, strangers especially, so I donned my dignity and said, "How do you do?"

"You haven't been introduced," objected Pat. "Mr. Carrer, this is Phyl, only usually she doesn't look so rowdy."

There was nothing to do but laugh. So we did laugh, all of us, and after that everything was easy. In fact I have never met anyone who was as easy to know as Mr. Carrer is. He seems to have a genius for friendship. As I write, this evening, it doesn't seem possible that I have known him for a time that can be measured only by hours, any more than it seems possible that he is the same man I was so brazenly calling "drunkard" last night.

Truly I had not hoped to like him, so very well; and I do like him—so very well. I like to look at him. I had expected a wreck of a man. There is nothing in the least wreckish about him. He is slender and rather pale, but he is straight and tall and strong-seeming. His eyes are brown, with heavy brows and lashes, and his hair is brown too, with a wave in it. Perhaps he is just a bit too handsome for a man; but since he seems unaware of it, it does not need to matter. In no way does he resemble Mr. Macelwayne, except sometimes when he smiles. I had supposed I'd feel sorry for him. It would be sheer impudence.

For the first hour, after we met, I kept trying to adjust the Tony Mr. Macelwayne had told me about to the man with whom I was talking. It was no go. I gave up and decided to forget everything Mr. Macelwayne had said. It will be easier.

I think he felt rather the same way about me because, several times, at first, I caught him looking at me with a puzzled uncertain expression, and later he said:

"Unk had me sort of baffled about you, do you know? I was expecting sort of a cross between Peter Pan, Mrs. Pankhurst and Puck, and I found —" he hesitated.

"You found?" I prompted. I was rather ashamed of that prompting, when I had done it, but it was such a temptation. I do like to have folks talk about me, to my face.

"I found — you," he said.

I wonder what he meant by that? I *think* it doesn't mean anything.

Quite soon, after that, Mr. Macelwayne suggested a spree. At least he told Mr. Carrer that I had suggested one, and asked me whether I had forgotten.

Pat was immediately elated: "Will it be a skimpy, or a somebody has died in England one?" he questioned.

"Somebody has died in England," I answered, but with a frown which I hoped would silence him.

"I told you they spoke a different language," said Mr. Macelwayne. All the time he had rather too much the air of showing us off.

"But what about this death in England?" said Mr. Carrer. "I am tremendously interested."

"Phyl's frowning for me not to tell," said all of my family.

"I am not," I denied.

"Why, you were so!"

Of course I must explain: "Pat means that several times since we have been on the Bone a great or a great-great of mother's has died in England, and they have left me a little bit of money, just a little bit —"

"Not such an awful little bit," objected all of my family, "enough for a splurge in books, always, and a regular spree, three kinds of cheese and no fair counting the nuts, and salad dressing made all of olive oil not mixed with cooking oil, and —"

"And like that," I interrupted, "so now you know." I don't know whatever could have been the matter with Pat, dragging out all our culinary economy skeletons like that.

When I spoke to him about it, later, he shook his head and said I was getting lots different of late, since we had been having so much society. I wonder — am I?

I know that to-night was the first time in years

that I have been sad about clothes. When I went to my room to dress for the spree and took my party dress out of its bag I saw that party dress, really saw it, for the first time in five years. I got it to wear to a wedding, five years ago, and ever since I have been wearing it, two or three times a year, maybe, and serenely thinking it was a lovely dress, blue messaline and white lace and pink rosebuds.

To-night I saw that the silk was faded and streaked; that the lace was limp; that the rosebuds were wilted fribbish looking things. The skirt was skimpy and long when it should have been short and full, and the waist-line was up under my arms. I remembered, distinctly, having heard Lotta say that no one wore messaline any more.

"Poo-oo!" said I to myself, "what do you care?" And I jumped into the dress quickly, to get it over with.

"Ya-a-a!" jeered myself to me, as I looked in the mirror,— "but you do care, just the same."

I did. The trouble was I looked funny. Nothing else. Just funny. Odd that I had never noticed before how ridiculous bobbed hair looks in an evening dress. If I had owned any hairpins I'd have tried to pin it up, but I didn't own any hairpins. I ripped the blue ribbon band off of my pincushion and tied that around my hair. It looked better. Pat thought

so too. He came in, right then, to offer to hook me up, and I asked him.

When he had finished the hooking: "Gee, Phyl," he said, "you just naturally look perfectly beautiful," and his dear big eyes and his dear little mouth were both opened round with admiration. It was sweet, gratifyingly sweet but not reassuringly sweet. I resolved to countermand the order I had sent to the city for a set of Turgénieff and take the money and buy me a new dress.

I thought the men looked a bit startled, shocked, when they first saw me dressed up; but they were kind enough to conceal their feelings in just a moment and, in just a little while, I forgot all about my clothes, as I always do, and never did think of them again until right now.

The spree was a success, right from the first when we all went out in the rain into the woods to get decorations, until the very last minute when they left, apologizing for the clock.

I have changed my mind about countermanding the order for the books. Mr. Carrer agrees with me about the way I rank the Russians: Turgénieff first; Dostoyevsky second; Gorky third, and Tolstoy last. Never before have I met anyone who agreed with me about that; always they have held up their hands in horror at the idea of placing Tolstoy last. It is good to be agreed with.

The perfect stranger laughed at us about it: "But why," he asked, "stand them up so, as if they were a class in spelling, one at the head and one at the foot, trying to spell one another down? I know that the 'different men for different moods' attitude is considered bromidic now, and yet it seems to me to be the only reasonable way."

"That is the trouble with bromidioms, Unk," said Mr. Carrer, (I wish he wouldn't call Mr. Macelwayne "Unk,") "they are always reasonable."

"But," said all of my family, "Phyl wants to be reasonable, it is one of her stumps, third on her stump list, to be reasonable. Oh," he broke off, pettishly, "do stop frowning at me, Phyl, you've been doing it all day. You know it is on your list, third, to be reasonable."

Mr. Macelwayne said something complimentary, and Mr. Carrer said, "Heaven forbid," and something about a paradox, and to change the subject I told them about the nice young man who thought we should have preferences.

"I quite agree with him," said Mr. Carrer.

"But not stationary ones," I objected, "the biggest adventures I have in the world are the ones I get by changing my mind."

"Preferences, perhaps," said Mr. Macelwayne, "if we can keep them distinct from prejudice."

And that, of course, brought us to discussing "The

Research Magnificent." Perhaps I did get a bit too enthusiastic. I'm apt to, particularly about Wells. At any rate when I said that I didn't read that book at all, I felt it, and that it wasn't a book to me, it was a something important added to my life, Mr. Carrer laughed and wondered whatever would happen to me if I were to stop living in a book world and come to live in the real world.

And again, when I was speaking of Browning, Mr. Carrer laughed and said I was much too little and fuzzy haired to have Browning for my pet poet.

"Whom then?" I demanded.

"Well," he said, "I should say James Whitcomb Riley."

But I didn't mind. I was not at all offended. It was so good to talk books again. So good! When I realize how I enjoyed this evening it makes me a little ashamed and almost sorry for myself. Could anything in the big world be sillier? To be sorry for one's self because one has been happy? Answer is: No.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

I received two letters this morning, one from Lotta, one from Kitty. Lotta's was white, written on ruled paper, and I think she had been doing something with onions just before she wrote. Kitty's was baby-blue, gold-edged, and had sachet powder about it. I liked Lotta's the best for looks and Kitty's the best for context.

"Dearest Miss Winfree:"—Kitty's said,—“I am sorry to disappoint you, but a girl named Mazie who works in the same office with me has got her vacation first, so I have to take her place in June and cannot accept your *kind* invitation to visit you in your little picturesque home until next month, July.

“I am *very* sorry and disappointed at having to postpone the trip because it is very quiet here now and there is no *particular attraction* (ha! ha!) in town at present. But we expect a big time during the Rose Carnival so it *may* pick up some then. *Too bad* you can't come down for it. Well, I *must* close now to get this mailed. With fondest love, Kitty.

“P.S. If nothing happens to the reverse I will be there with bells(?) on the 10th of July. K.”

It made me feel as if I had lived in the world a long time and had never managed to get acquainted. I would not let all of my family see it. It didn't seem fair to show it, even to him. And when I refused to let him read Lotta's letter, either, he was quite hurt about it and said that it seemed to him, for a good friend, I was getting too darn mysterious.

Lotta's letter did things to me, queer upsetting things. This morning was a morning of exhilaration; a joyous jubilee of vivid colorings, sunshine and birds' songs, prevented from returning to Heaven, capped and held down on earth by a sky of dense impenetrable blue; a morning as fresh and vigorous as the very first morning of all must have been; a morning that stood straight and sang, "I am new!"

"Dear Phyllis:"—so Lotta's letter said,—"I am sure you will want to know that Henry's grave is far from neat. I went out to the grave yard to-day, I always go the day before Decoration Day to avoid the crowds, and when I had finished my little cousin's grave I went to view Henry's. It is in a state; the grass and weeds have grown high on it and the tombstone needs cleaning. I did what I could, though I did not feel it was my place, but as his people are back east and you are out of town I did what I could. I pulled some of the weeds and grass and left some snowballs at the head and foot, but as someone has stolen the vases, I had to put the snowballs in the holes in the

ground and I suppose they will be withered by tomorrow when people will see it. I went to interview the caretaker and he says he will keep the grave in order for a dollar a month or ten dollars a year, in advance. That seems rather dear to me, but he won't do it for less.

"Now, Phyllis, if I were you, I'd just sit down and write to his people about it as it is their place to attend to it. But if you want to do it and will send me the check I will make a trip out there and arrange it for you. I have very little time to spare but, my dear, we must think of others and not forget the dead.

"I have been very busy this month putting down fruit. Your brother is having trouble with his stomach again. I hope you and Patrick are enjoying good health. Yours affectionately, Lotta."

A letter of that sort, should, I suppose, call forth at first what story writers name conflicting emotions. It did not with me. Not any. That was the trouble. I had but one emotion. Annoyance. I was annoyed with Lotta for poking about. I was annoyed with myself for being annoyed. I tried to toss the letter aside to consider at a time totally unlike this morning, a time that had a place in it for graves and gloom and pallid things. The letter refused to be tossed. Arrogantly it inserted itself in the forefront of my mind and demanded attention.

I went for a walk, alone, down to wee river and sat

on a log and tried vilifying myself. It was no good. I tried telling myself that I was hard hearted, capricious, unfaithful. No good. Then I tried to be sentimental, prefixed Henry's name with a "poor," and scurried around in my dark chamber and dragged out a lot of old memories. The trouble was that they were old; perfectly good memories seven years ago, atrophied now from disuse.

"Phyllis Winfree," I asked myself, crossly, "whatever can be the matter with you? Seven years ago you were willing to promise to try to keep Henry's love and house in order for the remainder of your life. To-day someone has asked you to keep his grave in order and you are fussing about it."

"Not that way," myself insisted to me, "if you have to think of Henry's grave, at all, you'd much rather think of it as a tidy grave. You'd much rather think of any one's grave as a tidy grave. But — you don't care to think about graves at all, nor — about Henry at all. Not now. Not any."

I went home and answered Lotta's letter and sent her the check and thanked her and decided to forget all about it. I couldn't. All day those grave thoughts kept remembering themselves to me at the most unsuitable times, in the most incongruous places: once when I fell off the Jap's motor cycle — Tony is teaching me to ride, just for fun — again when we were all in swimming up above the dam; and, most violently

of all when the perfect stranger and I were walking down to Mr. Miser's together this late afternoon.

"There is a trouble somewhere about," said Mr. Macelwayne, suddenly, "I know, because I have seen you trying to shake it away with your head. Just now you did it, again."

"No," I fibbed. I couldn't go telling him about Henry's grave when I had never told him about Henry.

"I hope," he asked, anxiously, "that you are not worrying over Tony?"

I felt base. Exactly that. Here I had been doing nothing but being very busy and happy during the past weeks and, it seemed, a part of the time at least I should have been worrying about Tony. Only, I hadn't had any notion that Tony needed to be worried about; he had seemed happy and busy, too, so I hadn't looked more closely to see whether there might be a reason for worry. I had gone on, blithely and blindly, and had let Mr. Macelwayne do the worrying, all by himself.

I told him the truth about the worrying. There was nothing else to tell him; and he said he was very glad it had been that way and tried to change the subject, but I would not have it so.

"Isn't he — as well?" I insisted. "Is he dissatisfied really and just pretending, to be polite, or — what is the trouble?"

The trouble was a serious one, when I had finally

managed to wrest the truth of it from Mr. Macelwayne. What he called "the craving" had hold of Tony quite tightly. Mr. Macelwayne said that in the day time, when we were all playing together, Tony seemed to forget it but, at night sometimes, it was terrible. He told me, then, a bit about some of the nights he had been having with Tony of late.

"The worst of it is," he said, "that he refuses to see things honestly. Or, perhaps I should not say refuses, perhaps I should say he can't see things honestly. He doesn't see why I won't agree to his going down to the city for a few days and then coming back up here. It would be all the good that has been done, so far, undone. He can't see that. He regards me and my objections much as we might regard some finical old lady who thinks it is 'wrong' to put brandy in a pudding sauce."

"But — after you have explained to him?" I questioned.

"Explanations are rather difficult things with Tony, at times."

"But," I said, again, "he wants to get over it, get — quite well, doesn't he?"

"Usually, yes. I think he does. But there are hours — Last night he did not want anything in the world but a drink of brandy."

"Is it — just brandy?" I asked.

"Just brandy."

After that I understood a little better. I have read in books about it.

There was a long silence. I did not realize it until Mr. Macelwayne had broken it, speaking in a low voice as if he were talking to himself: "Sometimes I think," he said, "that if Tony goes back, this time, I'll give up."

"Give up?"

"Give Tony up to it. Acknowledge that it is a better fighter than I and bow myself out."

"Sometimes you think so," I said, "but you won't."

"Thank you. No, I won't."

Then there seemed to be nothing to say, so I didn't say anything.

"You see," he apologized, "the last few years have been all fighting and all failures."

"This one won't be all failure," I said, not because there was any sensible reason for saying it, but because I felt as if I could not bear not to try to comfort him, some.

"This is different," he said, "never before have I had anyone to help me."

"And is someone helping you now?" I asked.

He looked at me and smiled. I had to understand what he meant, and I could feel my face getting all boiled-looking with blushes. Annoying.

"I haven't," I argued, "not any. I have been so stupidly blind, never knowing that help was needed.

But now, if it doesn't seem impudent to you, I am going to try, if —"

"But for you," he interrupted, "Tony would not have stayed up here one week."

"If," I continued, "if you will tell me, show me how. I don't seem to know how very well."

He would not tell me how, he would insist that I did know how quite well enough.

Perhaps I grew too earnest about it,— I know that I am apt to get too earnest about things,— for at last he smiled and said: "And is this the small person who was insisting, about a month ago, that if Tony were to be helped at all he could help himself?"

"I didn't know Tony then," I explained.

He reached over and patted my shoulder. It is a way he has. I like the way.

"Dear child," he said, and then we had come to Mr. Miser's door.

"I think it was something about the water," said Mr. Miser, as we went in, "but anyways I says to myself, I says, 'Ef you live along of crazy folks you'll get crazy yourself,' I says, and I got out."

Mr. Macelwayne looked helplessly at me. He has not grown accustomed to Mr. Miser's unceremonious openings.

"Oh," I asked, "were you at one time living along of crazy folks, Mr. Totenberry?"

"All of 'em," he answered, "crazy, clean crazy."

Down on the scow. Of course all folks is more or less crazy, that's as it is, but down in scow town they was all more and none less but me. There was a woman, sizable, wouldn't turn her hand to nothin'. Said she needn't; said all she needed to do was set and radiate. So she set and she radiated and the neighbors had to bring her in her grub an' she had the nerve to tell 'em she'd radiated it. Old man left her of course, fit of disgust. She never raised a hair. Set and radiated; said she'd radiated him off and good riddance.

"'Nother fellow, preacher by trade but he quit and went to makin' paint. Paint wouldn't paint no better'n gravy would of, but he'd git out and streak up the hule neighborhood with it. Claimed he was makin' tests. Come home one night and found my scow drippin' baby-blue with pink bowknots around for trimmin'. Claimed he done it in a spirit of brotherly love. Drat! Dripped off in a week. First makin' me a laughin' stock for the hule river. Some claimed he was goin' to marry the radiator, but he give over. 'Nother fellow —"

I hated to interrupt because the perfect stranger was enjoying himself so thoroughly, but it was very late and Pat would be needing his dinner so I did interrupt and I asked him about the pig he had killed and the pork we had come to buy.

He sold us the pork, at an absurdly high price, and

he gave me, as we left, a bit of unsolicited advice, free :

"Little gal," he said, as he pocketed my money, "give and take's all right so fur as it goes. But you want'a keep a eye peeled so's to see you ain't doin' all the givin' and a'nother party doin' all the takin'."

"I wonder," said Mr. Macelwayne, as soon as we were outside, "exactly what our little fat friend meant by that last remark of his?"

"Probably he meant that I was not canny enough, allowing him to overcharge me so for the pork."

"No," answered Mr. Macelwayne, "I know what he meant. He is entirely right. You are doing all the giving and Tony and I are doing all the taking —"

"Not that way," I interrupted. I could not tell him about all that he and Tony had given me, this May month; not possibly. I couldn't tell anyone. I haven't told myself.

"For instance," he persisted, "you were troubled to-day. I have seen flashes of it all during the day, but instead of finding out what your trouble was I burdened you with our troubles."

"I did have a trouble," I confessed, "a messy, morbid trouble and you have made me forget all about it. I was unhappy, I think, because I couldn't be unhappy. There is nothing —" I stopped, short.

"'There is nothing?'" he prompted.

"Nothing so silly as that," I finished. What I had

started to say had been that there was nothing in the world which could make one forget an imaginary trouble as quickly as a real trouble could.

"That," he answered, "is a sentence. But it isn't the sentence you began."

"Married brother," I said, "is a contractor, builds buildings, you know, that sort of thing. The last building he did was a garage and the owner was a fearfully pernicious old man. Poked about. Found flaws and fault. He came down one morning, looked at the garage, and remarked that one corner of it was entirely out of plumb. He and the foreman were having a heated argument about it when married brother came up and, to settle the matter, swung the plumb-line. It fell true. 'So, you see, it is plumb?' said married brother. 'Well,' replied the owner, grudgingly, 'anyway it *jest barely* is.'"

Mr. Macelwayne laughed, satisfactorily: "But," he said, "is there any connection?"

"Not any," I answered, "except that all folks are more or less crazy, and that's as it is."

"Old sport," all of my family said to me, just now, "which do you like the best, Mr. Macelwayne or Tony?"

"Which do you?"

"Well — Tony calls me 'old man' and when I'm with him I feel like I was as old as he was. Mr. Mac-

elwayne just calls me 'Pat,' but when I'm with him I feel like he wasn't any older'n I am."

"So you like Tony the better?"

"I don't know. Which do you?"

"Something like that," I answered.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

I love! And there it has been said, and there it is written. Because I have been a coward and a stingy I have allowed almost all of June to slip by, afraid to say those wonder words; afraid to write them; unwilling, even, to think them.

“Sh-h-h!” my heart has said, as if love were a hushable thing. “You must not,” my mind has urged, “because you can not say, ‘I love and am loved,’” as if love were a thing to be traded. And another part of me, a crooked crazy part which I shall call distorted conscience, has whispered, sometimes: “Shame!” As if to give love, freely and unasked, were a disgraceful thing to do.

But, worst of all I think, has been that old ninny-hammer, my sense of humor. It has formed a habit, of late, of perching on the foot of my bed at night and muttering such words as, “moonstruck,” and “loony,” and jeering such sentences as “Love, of course you do, you little dowdy old maid. Look at you, and then look at him. Oh-ho! It is simply ree-dic-a-lous (he pronounces it so), come — laugh!” There he sits and wags his silly fat head and jeers and giggles until he makes me cry.

Worse he is, at night, than my sense, my sober common sense is in the day time, when it speaks to me sternly and says: "Come! Come! Enough and too much of this nonsense. Love is merely a state of mind, and in your case it is a senseless, sentimental state. Get out of it. Unrequited love, like messaline, is not worn any more. Don't fool yourself with fancies, either, that your love need not be unrequited. Look, and see. Your sense of humor was quite right last night when he said you looked funny in it."

So it has been for the past weeks, my common sense, my sense of humor, my crooked conscience, my mind and my heart all fighting away with me. It was uncomfortable. It could not go on like that. One needs to be friendly with one's ownself, and at peace.

Consequently this morning, when the scarlet notes of the sunrise woke me, I decided to spend this day trying to make up with myself. I stole out of bed and dressed quietly; and took my ledger and my pencil and both my Brownings, Robert and Elizabeth (excellent names, excellent people); and put my breakfast in one pocket of my sweater, and my luncheon in the other pocket of my sweater; and left a note for all of my family telling him that I was going to have an all alone day, might not be back before evening, and fared forth, peace seeking.

It was very early, so early the sky was yet pinked from the sunrise, and nearly neighbor's oat fields were

frosted silver gray with dew ; the sort of early morning that makes one feel sorry for everyone in the world who is asleep and glad about everything else. But it was not at all the sort of morning in which to think thoughts, planned, patterned ahead thoughts, that is.

Some of the cold dew mist was still lingering in the air, it made one want to walk briskly to keep warm, and I thought about that. I smelled the keen crisp breath of the ferns, and the heavy sweet scent of the wild orange blossoms, and I looked at their lacy greenness and at their waxy whiteness, and thought about that. I saw a bird with a red and brown coat and a bright white vest, and I thought about him. Two big butterflies, bright yellow trimmed with black, flying together, flitting in front of me, now high, now low, now disappearing, now reappearing, kept my thoughts giddy for nearly a mile. Then there were some wild tiger lilies to be considered, tiny, haughty, vivid things ; and then a cluster of columbine, bright capped and merry, hiding underneath the tallest ferns, waiting for their fairy harlequins. Then, down the road past the fences where the wild roses spread, pink and dearly dainty as the palms of babies' hands ; and over the fence, and across the fields, and there a handful of wet red ripe strawberries. Somewhere in the world, I supposed, there were folks who had never tasted strawberries, picked very early in the morning from a field that was a mixture of sunshine and dew ; and I felt

sorry for their tasters and glad for mine as I gobbled greedily. Then, under the fence, this time, and up the hill and down the little brown trail, right into the very inside of the woods. And to the something within me that was objecting, all the while, "You came to think about love," I answered, all the while, "But I am, I am thinking about love." "But not that way," the something within me would fret. "This way, then," I'd exalt, "this way, then!"

Just before I began to get tired I stopped, under a cedar tree, and ate my bread and butter, and drank cold spring water, out of a leaf; and I was so content, a-resting and a-feeding, that I quite forgot the purpose of my trip. When I had finished my breakfast I lay down on the good hard ground, flat on my back, and looked up and up through the trees' dark branches into the bits of blue sky peeking through. And I thought — just that: the good hard ground, and the scent of the cedar, and the dark tree branches, and the bits of blue sky, peeking through.

Quite suddenly, without my speaking to it at all, my heart stepped out and spoke to me, and said: "You love! Be proud. To love is the one achievement. Only to the worthy does God give the great ability. Our power to love is His measure of our nearness to Him."

"But —" I began, weakly.

My mind spoke, sharply: "Don't be humble. It

is the worst form of egotism. Useful, perhaps, sometimes, but not to be connected with love. Love is elemental. If you love greatly, yourself is merely a part of your love: a mote in a blinding beam of sunlight; a drop in a wide river; a pebble hidden somewhere near the base of a mountain."

"Yes," I answered, "like that it is, very like that."

"Then," spoke my conscience, "we'll speak no more of shame. It has no place here. Give and take is a miser's motto. Give, is God's. There can be no shame in giving, no virtue in receiving. The merest mindless thing can be given love. To love it requires not only a mind, but something extra in one's soul."

"Only —" I thought, "Lotta and married brother."

My sense of humor laughed: "Like many folks," it said, "they mistook a passion in the spring for a life love and tried to padlock it with marriage. Failed, of course. Palliatives, since then a certain amount of comfort for both and a coveted title, "Mrs." for her. Freedom for neither. Joy for neither. Resignation. The habit of affection. Sometimes the habit formed is hate, then folks endure, or murder, or get a divorce, according to their natures."

"But," I protested, "that isn't funny. Not any."

"Ludicrous," snapped my sense of humor, "in their case. Nothing so ludicrous as an ill-starred tragedy. That is why I have been making fun of you, these nights."

"My love," I informed it, "shan't even taste of tragedy. Not ever. Whether I am ever loved in return makes no difference to the triumph of my having loved. That is what my love is, a triumph."

"Very well," agreed my sense of humor, "keep it so and I'll stop jeering. But I refuse to be left out of it entirely. I am a part of you, so I must be a part of it. You read a phrase once, I have forgotten where, that said, 'the funniness of near and dear things.' Remember it. It will keep your love sane and free from sentimentality. The mother who laughs over her baby's first pair of shoes, long put away, is a wiser woman and consequently a better mother than the one who cries over them. The girl who laughs over her love letters is sane and safe; the girl who cries over them is silly and in danger. No matter if tears are in your eyes, as you laugh, the laughing is the thing."

"For a sense of humor," I remarked, "you are doing a deal of talking."

"I'm not your sense of humor now, I'm your common sense," it complained, "so often you mistake one of us for the other."

"But," I objected, "I came out here to-day to war with all of you fellows, and you haven't warred. You have stepped out meekly, one by one, and agreed with me. I wonder why?"

"Because," they answered in chorus, "you were going to war to gain peace. Peace came first, without

the fight. After you had peace for yourself there was nothing else for us to do."

All the way home I walked with a taller chin because I dared to love.

"Kind'a mean," so all of my family greeted me.

"Not mean," I protested.

"It's been lonesome," whined he.

"Lonesome," I jeered, knowing very well that he likes all alone days quite as much as I do.

"Well," he explained, "if I'd been all alone I don't guess I'd of minded much, 'cause I could have just naturally cut loose and pretended. But I kind'a stuck around with Tony and Mr. Macelwayne and they were lonesome and that made me lonesome. Tony wouldn't do a thing but lie in the hammock and complain. It was awful dull. Once we thought we heard you coming and Tony jumped up and threw down his book, and then it was only nearly neighbor coming to row about the Jap stealing cherries, which he hadn't done, and Tony was awful mad.

"After that he said he'd take me for an automobile ride; but there wasn't any gasoline in the tank and Tony got mad again about that. And it was awful dull. 'N' I stayed down there for luncheon, but it was no good much. That Jap is heavy on the trimmings but not much on the fillings, and Tony is going to fire him, I guess. 'N'they said let's go fishing and I said

no use to fish in the daytime when there's a full moon at night, and they thought I didn't know and we went anyway, and nobody got a strike and Tony was kind'a mad about that, and it was awful dull. 'N I played the phonograph until Tony swore and said the blank thing got on his nerves, and then I went down to the mail box and found a letter for Tony and he read it and acted funny and gave it to Mr. Macelwayne to read, and then they began to act mysterious and I said, 'I got'a go home,' and they said, 'No, don't go,' and I said, 'I gotta,' and I did. And if you go off again you needn't think I'm going to stick around and entertain those fellows, 'cause I ain't. It was awful dull."

"I guess," said all of my family, later, "I guess that letter was pretty serious, to-day."

"No fair guessing about other folks' letters," I warned but, since then, I'm afraid I have been guessing a bit myself.

Mr. Macelwayne and Tony came in, after dinner, and it seemed to me, as it had seemed to all of my family, that they acted rather mysteriously. Tony kept looking at Pat in a most peculiar penetrating manner. I wonder whether the child did or said some atrocious thing, to-day.

Neither of them mentioned the letter (no reason at all why they should mention it, of course), until just as they were leaving Mr. Macelwayne said, prefacing

it with a "by the way," as if trying to make it casual, that he had received a letter which would take him down to the city for a few days, and asked whether there were any errands he might do for me, down there.

"But," said Pat, and I was so embarrassed, "that letter was addressed to Tony."

"Quite so, young man," said Tony sharply. He had never before called Pat "young man," and I am afraid it hurt Pat's feelings, some. Even if he did say or do some atrocious thing Tony might remember that Pat is only nine years old.

I thought of an easy errand, quickly, to change the subject, and then they left. But, in just a minute, Mr. Macelwayne came back. Pat had gone into perch-edifice, so we were alone.

"Would you —" he hesitated, "could you, sort of keep an eye on the boy for me, while I am away?"

Would I, could I, sort of keep an eye on the boy!

When I had answered he took both my hands in his and called me "dear child" and thanked me, and said good-night and hurried fast away.

All of my family was glooming when I went into the house. "Old scout," he questioned, "do you like Tony awful well?"

"Awful well," I echoed and agreed.

"Well as me?"

" 'Silly Billy, forgot his lesson leaf! ' "

" Well, anyway, I j just naturally like Mr. Macelwayne lots the best."

I did a brave thing. I put my arms around all of my family and hugged him tight and kissed him, one kiss each behind each ear. He squirmed and said to " cut it," but later :

" I like you better'n either of 'em, though, Phyl. They are all right, but they ain't near such good sports as you are. Not near."

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The day Mr. Macelwayne left for the city,—he went on the early morning train,—it rained; not the sort of rain we usually have in June, mild and pleasant and friendly feeling, but a sloppy, steady, straight down pouring all day long from skies hard granite gray. The sort of rainy day that makes one sure it has been raining since the first tick of time, and will keep on raining until the world is entirely submerged. A cry-baby cross-patch day, and the harder it cross-patched and cry-babyed the harder the wind shook it and scolded it.

While I was trying to light the kitchen fire, to prepare breakfast, nearly neighbor came. He said that he had come early because he knew that if he waited until a decent hour I'd be out slopping about in the wet, and that he wanted to borrow pen and ink and paper because he was going to write to the city paper and advertise his place for sale. Whenever nearly neighbor gets out of humor he advertises his place for sale. He was decidedly out of humor that morning: said the rain would spoil all the fruit crop on the entire Pacific Coast; said that if it kept on raining, so, for a few days we should have fearful landslides and that perch-ed-

fice was directly in the path of the land which was sure to slide first; said, next:

"I think you ought'a be told that thar's talk goin' around."

"Talk?" I questioned, as usual not understanding him.

"'Bout your goin's on with these here city fellows."

"Goings on? Nonsense!"

"Meb'be so. But as Mrs. Snyder what lives on the other mountain says, she ain't the one to blame a motherless girl, but when it comes to stayin' up past hours with a man and him a foreigner! Says it come straight that thar ain't been nary a night for the past month but you and that Carrer as he calls himself was out carryin' on —"

"That," I said, with as much composure as I could muster, "is a straightforward lie. I am not interested in lies, nor in the people who tell them. Not any. Are you really going to try to sell your place?"

"So quick it'll make your head swim, if I can git my price."

The trouble was that my head was swimming, right then. At any time it is a bad thing to get furiously, dizzily angry, but it is worst of all to get that way very early on a rainy morning, before breakfast. When the swimming went out of my head the place where it had been ached a bit. I never do have headaches, so I am intolerant with them.

Just after nearly neighbor had left all of my family came out, sleepy eyed and in his bathrobe: "I'd think," he said, "that nearly neighbor'd sometime get sense enough to wipe his feet. Look how he's tracked our clean floor!"

"Oh," I answered, "I don't mind that dirt, I can scrub it out."

All of my family looked about him, from the ceiling to the base boards and back again: "Where," he questioned, "is the other dirt? The dirt you do mind, Phyl?"

"Oh — out and around," I evaded.

"Kind'a funny," remarked all of my family, suspiciously, "you fussing about out and around dirt. But anyhow I guess you needn't. I guess this old rain'll just naturally fix it."

"Surely," I answered, as if I had not thought of that, but I knew that the rain would do no bit of good. It was sunshine I needed, bright germ-killing sanitary sunshine. On a sunshiny day, I felt sure, I could grin at the gossip and be glad I was furnishing entertainment for folks who get so little; but this day was too gray and abominable for grins or altruism. I did hope Mrs. Snyder was no relation to my pleasant, "Good morning" man.

Before we had quite finished eating breakfast Tony came up, wearing a silk-lined raincoat and rubber overshoes and carrying an umbrella. Never before had he

seemed in the least effeminate to me. Too, he acted rather as if Pat and I were responsible for the rain and the mud and most everything uncomfortable in the world. But he had been having a bad time of it, so it was easy to ignore.

His sleeping tent had leaked. He had quarreled with the Jap, violently I judged, and the Jap had left. He had attempted to manage his own breakfast, had failed, and was breakfastless.

"It is all very fine for Unk," he complained, "he gets himself well out of it, into a comfortable hotel, and leaves the rest of us to suffer."

It sounded so exactly like Pat, little nine-year-old Pat, that I had to hurry into the kitchen to hide my smiles. I wonder why it is that a grown up man is never so appealing as he is when he acts like a small boy?

Out in the kitchen I baked a griddle full of fresh pancakes and took them back with me. "Supposing," I suggested, "that we don't suffer. Supposing, instead, that you pull your chair up here and eat these, and an omelette I'll have ready in a jiffy?"

He said that really I was much too good to him; and that really he had not meant to put me to so much trouble; and that really he was not hungry. Then he sat down and ate five hotcakes, an omelette with huckleberry jelly, and drank three cups of coffee.

After that he didn't say anything more about suffering.

But it was a dreary day, a day that dragged each hour out to the full limit of its dreariness. It was my fault, partly — mostly, I suppose. I wasn't willing to let the day manage itself, so much I wanted to make it a happy cheerful day, to defy the gray outside with a colorful inside; and I tried too hard, took my steps too long, and that meant failure.

I built a great roaring fire in the fireplace because I wanted the room to be cheerful. Soon, the room was too warm. I hunted out a pile of old mending to do, because I wanted to give Tony a good excuse for reading aloud. Usually he liked to read aloud and he reads so very well that, usually, one likes to listen. But this day, for a reason all his own, he rooted about in the books and dragged from the furthest corner of the lowest shelf a book of essays by Oscar Wilde, "Intentions." I despise that particular book. There are two reasons, only, why I give it a place on my shelves: for what it says about Browning, and because the author of it wrote "Reading Gaol" and "De Profundis."

And Tony enjoyed it. He lay there in the hammock and enjoyed that thing. He chuckled over the petty paradoxes; he smiled at the crooked quibbling; he paused to emphasize the cheating, tricky epigrams. And I sewed as fast as I could, and was glad Pat was

working on his invention and was not attending. He read for a too long time without looking up; but when he did look up, at last:

"What? You don't care for this?" he asked.

"I despise it."

"But it is brilliant."

"Bad brilliancy."

"Parts of it are beautiful —"

"Artificial beauty. There is no truth in it."

He got out of the hammock and sauntered over to the book shelves and put the volume back in its place: "Now," he said, nearly sneered, "for the good, the true and the beautiful. Our lady demands the combination of her literature. Here is Longfellow, I see. Is he sufficiently conventional and virtuous?"

It was an insult, of course. Right back of my eyes I could feel tears, but I would not let them leak out. He had meant to hurt me, that was the worst part. It is so hard to be hurt, on purpose, by those we care for.

When I did not answer him he turned. I suppose some of the hurt showed, much as I tried to hide it, because:

"Little woman," he said, "please forgive me. Sorry. I am beastly to-day."

I am afraid he was nearly right about that. He managed not to be actually rude again, to me, but he called Pat "young man," and fretted and fussed about

the room and blamed things; almost everything he blamed, excepting himself for being in such bad humor.

It did not make me care less for him. When one is really fond of a person the way the person acts does not matter, much. But it did make me unhappy and, since I was unhappy myself, my efforts to make him happy were quite futile.

Late in the afternoon I felt that I must get out of doors for a while, so Pat and I went for a walk. Tony refused to go with us. He was almost as scornful as nearly neighbor is about our slopping around in the wet.

"I wonder," said all of my family, as we were going up the road, "whether it is because Mr. Macelwayne isn't here or 'cause Tony is? We've always had fun before when it rained. In winter you and I have fun, old sport, and it rains all the time. I guess,"— with a sigh, "it's — the respectability."

"Respectability —" I pondered.

"Responsibility — I guess I mean. Tony makes us feel that way, like we ought'a be saying, 'excuse me.' It just naturally makes me mad."

When we reached home we found Tony fast asleep in the hammock. I think I never did realize before how entirely good to look at he is. Lying there, with all the strain erased from his face, sleeping with one hand under his cheek as Pat sleeps, he looked not un-

like Pat, and I wanted to go to him, and fix the Indian blanket more cozily about him, and smooth his hair back a bit, and be good to him, as I am to Pat when he is asleep. I did not. I contented myself with keeping us very quiet, so as not to waken him.

When he finally did waken, he, as Pat says about me, "woke up cross." He would not stay for dinner, though I had fussed a bit over it, and had lit the candles and put on the best tablecloth. He said his head ached and that he was going back to his camp and to bed. Of course he was polite about it; polite in that charming way of his that takes all the conventionality away from politeness and makes it seem like frank friendliness. But while he was protesting that he had imposed on us too long, as it was, I felt all the while that he was merely trying to escape an evening, dreary dull, as the whole long day had been. So I let him go, without urgings.

My own head still ached a bit, I had been so busy I had forgotten; but when he mentioned his headache it reminded me of mine. I did not want any dinner. I did not want to watch Pat eating his dinner. I went to my room and lay down on the bed for a while, in the dark, relaxing and resting. I didn't allow myself to think thoughts.

After a while Pat came in. "What's the matter, little woman?" he asked.

It was a surprise and a shock. "Don't call me that," I said.

"I thought you liked it," he answered. "Tony calls you that. Do you like better 'dear child' like Mr. Macelwayne calls you?"

"Best I like the names you call me," I answered. "Come, we'll go into the other room and play chess."

But first I put on old brown dress, because I can't afford to sit around in my best brown dress, serge gets shiny so quickly. Then I put out the candles, because we can afford wax candles only for company. And then I found that the lamp must be filled, and out in the shed, in the dark, I spilled coal-oil all over my hands. It smells for days. It won't come off. I cried a silly childish tear or so, out there alone. They were the same tears that had been trying to leak out ever since morning. It was good to be rid of them. I felt better.

We had played one game of chess, Pat had mated me in that, and we were setting up our pieces for the second game when I heard the whistle of the late train to town.

"Supposing," at first the thought presented itself to me as a mean joke, "supposing Tony is on that train. You have bored him all day."

I did not pay any serious attention to the thought for a moment or two; I simply jeered at it, and sauced

it, and explained to it that Tony was not like that, to go running off like a naughty child, the very first evening Mr. Macelwayne had left him alone.

The trouble was that Tony was rather like a naughty child, sometimes. The thought would not let me alone. It was quite like when I am cozy in bed at night and fancy I hear a robber in the kitchen. I am positive that I don't hear a robber in the kitchen; I know that there could not be a robber in the kitchen; why, there never was a robber in the kitchen. And the taller I pile my negatives the more certain I grow of my affirmative; I do hear a robber in the kitchen. Until, finally, I know that if I am to sleep instead of shiver all night I must get up and see, not that there is a robber in the kitchen, but that there isn't one.

So I made a silly excuse to Pat and ran down to the camp. There was a light in the tent they use for a living room. I whistled. The Jap boy parted the tent flaps, made a bow, and invited me to come in as casually as if I had visited the tent every night at ten o'clock.

"I thought you had left?" I said.

"I had temper," he said, "but for the old man I come back. Not for the young man. Son-of-gun!"

"Where is he? Has he retired?" I questioned.

"He has gone by the train," the Jap answered, "with purpose of joining his relative in town."

CHAPTER TWENTY

Of a sudden the rain had stopped, and it was clear white moonlight, and I was standing in our garden, and Mr. Macelwayne was holding my two hands in his and calling me, "dear child," and thanking me for my promise to keep an eye on the boy.

"Did he," I asked, "ride to the train in an automobile, or did he use your motor-cycle?"

"Neither case. He walked, swearing it too wettish to ride."

God, then, still loved me, some.

"May I borrow your motor-cycle, please?" I begged. "I — have an errand to do."

Imperturbably he wheeled it out for me, tested the tires, lighted the lights, and helped me to mount.

Just for a second I stopped at perch-edifice; long enough to change my slicker for a sweater, to grab a cap, and tell Pat not to worry but to go to bed and to sleep and I'd explain everything to him in the morning. He was frightened some and worried some, but I could not stop because I had to beat that train to town.

I had a chance to do it, if I could reach the main road, about a mile from perch-edifice, without any mis-

haps. Just a chance; nothing else. The main road is macadamized and goes as straight as a string, all down hill, right into the city.

The train is a local train, a silly gossipy gaddy little train, whose track twists and turns and goes far out of its way to stop at each tiny station; an obliging train that picks up milk cans and waits, if necessary, for folks to buy their tickets. Often and often have I execrated that train: sneered at it with the sneerers who called it a peanut roaster; jeered at it with the jeerers who made it the butt of all the old slow train stories since Artemus Ward; once, with the reformers, I even tried to reform it and signed a petition about it; but as no one paid any attention to the petition (are there people anywhere in the world who ever do pay any attention to petitions?), that did not matter.

The ride was not pleasant. No need to go into the dripping bumping details of it; it was not pleasant. When I reached the macadamized road I took a long breath and realized that I was doing an idiotic presumptuous thing with no semblance of sense to it, with much semblance of quixotry. When I reached the city I took another long breath, I think I had not taken one in between, and realized the same thing, all over again, and headed for the station.

I had three minutes to spare. During those three minutes I neither breathed nor bothered to realize anything. I was too scared. If all the water on me had

frozen into ice I could not have been a bit stiffer with freeze than I was with scare.

Then I saw Tony, handsome, nonchalant, all complete for dryness, silk umbrella, silk-lined raincoat, rubber overshoes, coming through the gate.

I walked over and stood in front of him and said: "Hello."

Of course I must have looked odd. Sopping wet people are apt to look odd. Too, I had on my old brown dress and my old red sweater and Pat's cap which I had grabbed by mistake. And I was all spattered up with mud and flattened out with fright. I must have looked fearful. I must have looked funny. But I wonder whether I looked enough so to give Tony a right to say what he did say, then?

What Tony said was: "Well! You funny little frump!"

He was surprised and he was angry, and those two emotions mixed seldom do produce politeness. I knew that, so I attempted a giggle, as if it were a joke, and did not answer.

"How did you get here?" he asked, ignoring the giggle.

"On the Jap's motor cycle."

"Why?"

"It was a silly, quixotic, presumptuous thing for me to do," I said, hoping, so, to conciliate him.

"It was," he agreed, and then: "So Unk has told

you all about it? Very kind of the old boy, I am sure."

"Tony," I said, "please let's not have it that way. Please let's don't be mad and sarcastic and — like that. Please —"

"Please," he caught up, "please let's play prettily together? Well, I say, please let us remember that you are a woman, grown, and that I am a man, and let us forget the kid stuff, for a while, if you can. Now the question is, what are you going to do?"

"What are you?"

"That has nothing to do with it."

We had walked into the station by that time and I could see his face. It was a tortured face. Men with tortured faces are not responsible, I knew. Neither are they amenable to argument.

"Come," I said, "people are staring, let's go outside."

We went out of the station. He put up his umbrella and I took his arm and we walked along, straight down the ugly ill-lighted street for blocks and blocks. Neither of us said anything.

"Where are you going?" he asked, at last.

"In here," I answered.

In here was a place that called itself, on its sign, "The Famous Chop House." It was bright and clean-seeming, but it was in a part of town folks refer to as unsavory.

"But I can't leave you here alone," he said.

"No," I agreed, "but you can come in with me."

I don't know why he came with me, but he did. I am sure it was through no sense of chivalry.

The waiter showed us into a little curtained off room. I ordered steaks and coffee. Tony took out his cigarette case and lighted a cigarette. When the waiter brought our supper Tony told him to order a taxicab.

"What are you going to do with it?" I asked, when the waiter had gone.

"I am going to put you into it and send you to some hotel for women."

"The trouble with that scheme is," I answered, "that I am not very puttable. Sometimes, to-night for instance, I won't be put."

"Just what *is* your game, anyway?" he asked.

"Tag," I answered.

"Of course," he said, "I can easily get rid of you."

"Not easily," I objected; "maybe, by some rotten trick. I suppose you feel like rotten tricks, now, though?"

He smiled, a mean smile. "Trying to hit my pride?" he asked.

"No." I passed him the meat sauce. He put some of it on his steak and began to eat. He had not been eating before. I reached for his cup of coffee, put some sugar and cream in it, and passed it back to him. He took a drink of it, and another drink. It seemed

to me he began to look a bit less tortured. He had not had any dinner. He needed something to eat.

"At any rate," he said, when the steak was almost finished, "you aren't maudlin, trying to appeal to my better self, my manhood—that stuff. Unk does. You don't talk about my mother and my wife."

"Not to-night," I answered, and changed his empty cup for my full cup without his noticing it.

"Why not to-night?" he asked.

"Just because I'm not doing those things to-night," I said, "and I'm not doing them because they would be silly."

"Rather late in the evening, isn't it, for you to start being sensible?"

"Rather," I agreed. I tried to agree with him as much as I could.

He drank the coffee and lit another cigarette. "And yet," he said, then, "you have a lot of sense, after all."

"Yes," I agreed.

The waiter brought the check. Tony paid it and we went out to the street. A taxicab was standing in front.

"You won't get into that and go sensibly and quietly to some hotel?" he asked.

"No," I said, "but we'd better both get in; people are staring at us, standing here. We don't match."

Because, I suppose, he was ashamed of being seen

with such a funny little frump, Tony did get into the machine and I followed, fairly stepping on his heels.

"See here," he said, "if I give you my word that I'll take a room at the Portland and stay there, straight, all night will you let me get out there alone, and will you go on to some Y. W. C. A. place — you must know the names, I don't — will you?"

"No," I said, "I won't."

"Why?"

"Because I think you have a cramp in your trigger finger to-night. You can't shoot straight."

Then he began to say things and he kept on saying them, to me and about me. No need to repeat, though I could. But I mustn't remember; I must forget. I must know that it was "the craving," that spoke that night, not Tony. I found myself saying, as I used to when I was a little girl, sing-songing it to myself: "*Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.*" It was a lie. It was silly and futile as all lies are, and there was no comfort in it; but I kept on and on thinking it to myself.

"Why don't you," he asked, "say, 'tut-tut,' and assure me that I don't mean what I am saying and insist that I'll be very sorry for this, to-morrow?"

"Well," I answered, "I'm not much for 'tut-tuttings', — they always sound foolish. And I suppose you do mean what you are saying, and I hadn't thought that you might be sorry to-morrow."

"Oh," he snarled, "that eternal naïveté of yours! Can't you ever drop the pose, under any circumstances?" He was started off again, and he kept it up; but he had jarred the doggerel out of my mind and I began to think of more useful things.

"When you can't do anything else with folks," I thought, "it is all right to forgive them." So I commenced to forgive him, as fast as he talked. It had enough impudence about it, my forgiving, and enough sneakiness to be some satisfactory.

"Only," I said, after a while when the forgiving was running a bit thin, "what is the use of all this talking about me, Tony?"

"I knew of no other way to interest you," he answered; but he leaned back against the cushions and closed his eyes as if he were tired to death and glad of an excuse to stop talking.

I looked out of the window and saw that we were only a few blocks away from the hotel whose name Tony had given to the driver. I did not know what might happen when we got there, but I did know that I must do something, or say something rather quickly. There was but one thing I really wanted to do. I decided, of a sudden, that when folks came to dangerous places and didn't know what to do, perhaps the best thing was to do what they wanted to do; perhaps that want was the God in them, prompting.

I went over and kneeled down beside Tony and

cuddled his tired head on my shoulder and kissed his white tortured face. I kissed him several times before he opened his eyes or paid any attention to me. Then:

"Why, little woman?" he asked.

"Just the same reason that I have done the other things to-night," I answered, "because I love you."

"Because you feel sorry for me, you mean," he contradicted, but his voice and his manner had changed and his arm went around me comfortingly, reassuringly.

I slipped down into the seat. "No," I said, "for some reason I don't feel sorry for you, I just feel very sorry for myself. All shaken up. Tired. Tony, please, let's go home?" To my entire chagrin a few tears began to leak out of my eyes. I don't know how Tony knew they were doing it, perhaps they were in my voice, but anyway he wiped them away with his big handkerchief.

The taxicab stopped and the driver opened the door.

"Please," I repeated, "let's go home?"

"Certainly," Tony answered and began to give the man directions. The man demurred. He did not know the roads; and fifty miles on such a night, and, and some more ands, until I heard money chinking. Then the door closed and the machine turned around. I'd had my eyes shut, all the time, to keep the tears tight.

"Perhaps," said Tony, "perhaps, some day, you'll forgive me?"

I could not tell him that I had been busy forgiving him most of the time. I was afraid it might make him cross, so I replied conventionally about there being nothing to forgive.

We didn't talk any more after that for a long time; but Tony's arm stayed around me, and it felt strong and safe. It was the first time since Henry that I had had a man's arm around me. I liked it.

"Those kisses," said Tony at last, as if he were speaking to himself, "were sweet,—exquisitely sweet."

I hadn't thought about making them sweet, when I was doing them, so "I haven't kissed much," I apologized, "not any grown man since Henry."

"I know," he said, and there was a smile in his voice, "they weren't exactly — how shall I say it? — experienced kisses, dear. But — who was Henry?"

"A man I used to know," I answered. "I was going to marry him, but he died so I didn't. It was a very long time ago."

"Will you marry me?" he asked, flatly, like that, with about as much eagerness as folks usually show when they go to pay their debts, or their taxes. That is what he was trying to do: pay his debt, his tax.

"No," I answered.

"But you said,—" he paused. I suppose he thought

it was not very polite to repeat and twit me about it.

"I said," I helped him, "that I loved you. I do. I love Pat, too. That's the way it is, the way I mean."

He sighed, a sigh as artificial as a Christmas tree ornament and exactly as sad. "But that wasn't fair," he said.

I thought he felt that he should argue about it, so I let him.

"Who wants to be loved as you love a little boy?" he questioned, next.

"Don't you?" I asked.

"Yes," he said, "I do. And thank —"

"Then," I interrupted, "since we have that part settled, let's try to go to sleep."

I took the other seat and curled up on it. It was just long enough to curl comfortably, but I did not go to sleep. Tony did. I knew he was sleepy because he had been yawning all the time he had been proposing and arguing. I watched him sleep for a little while, then I closed my eyes. I suppose anyone looks rather — odd, sitting up asleep in a taxicab.

When we came to the end of the macadamized road the driver refused to take us any further so we had to walk the other mile. We were tired. It was a trying walk, but we managed it nicely by keeping our mouths tight shut and speaking only when it was necessary. Our good-nights were more formal than they were friendly.

All this happened ten days ago. Nothing has been quite the same since. We don't play together as pleasantly as we did. The men act—grateful. It is stupid of them. They should know that nothing smashes friendship as effectually as gratitude. There is an undercurrent of constraint now, when we are all together, that used never to be there. It is sad. Dreary. Try as I may I can't get rid of it. Trying seems to make it worse.

I think Tony must have some notion of repaying me by being extra interested in Pat, extra good to him. Before he was satisfied with the fact that Pat was my adopted son; since he has pretended such interest that he has fairly insisted upon hearing all the details, the hows and whys and the when. Too, he has begun giving Pat presents: candy in big boxes meant for girls; books; a gun which I don't like him to have; a fishing-pole that embarrasses Pat because he'd much rather use his old one; a lot of intricate educational building blocks,—Pat scorns them as kid stuff,—almost every day something new coming from the city. I wish Tony would not. I do wish he would not. The presents are spoiling Pat, he is getting so that he expects them, he'll miss the constant excitement of them when they cease. And the men's attitude, their changed almost odd attitude is spoiling—many other things.

I find myself being almost glad that Kitty is coming to-morrow.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Kitty came this morning to live next to nature on the Bone for a month. She brought with her a trunk so large that it has to stay in the living-room, and a hat trunk besides with six hats in it.

Mr. Macelwayne and Tony took Pat and me down to the station in the automobile to meet her. When we got there we found that Joe Nuck, the man who does the carting for our mountain, had taken his team and his family and gone to the city for a vacation.

"But however," I questioned, "can we get her trunk up to perch-edifice?"

"Perhaps," Tony suggested, "we can get Pedeson to drive down for it this evening."

"Perhaps," I agreed, but I did not place many hopes with nearly neighbor. At best he is not exactly obliging; and since our misunderstanding, and since the men have come to camp on the mountain nearly neighbor has not been at his best.

"Maybe," suggested all of my family, "you could take it up in the automobile."

"Afraid not, very well," said Tony, and Mr. Macelwayne did not disagree with him.

Ten minutes later Tony was begging Kitty not to worry for an instant about her luggage, assuring her that "Unk" (I wish he wouldn't call Mr. Macelwayne that) and he would make another trip immediately and bring it up without a bit of inconvenience and, again, Mr. Macelwayne did not disagree with him.

You see I had told the men she was attractive, but I had not told them how perfectly pretty she was. I had wanted to surprise them. I did.

"Jove!" Tony exclaimed when he saw her standing on the platform a minute before the train stopped. "There is the prettiest girl I have ever seen."

I am sure it was not an exaggeration; just anyone, I think, could have exclaimed the same thing truthfully right then. And her clothes were so exquisite, so fresh and dainty; from the single big rose blooming on her droopy hat to the toes of her white kid shoes she was perfect. She seemed so much too lovely a thing to throw her arms around me and kiss me, as she did.

Before she got into the machine Mr. Macelwayne took out his handkerchief and dusted the seat carefully. I glanced over my shoulder at my dress. It had gotten a bit dusty from the seat. But then it was only an old gingham, faded some and shrunk some too, so folks would know that it had been washed and could be washed again.

Kitty and I spent most of the morning and part of the afternoon unpacking her trunk. I enjoyed it. It

has been such a time since I have talked to another girl and looked at pretty dresses and lingerie and fancy fixings. Kitty's clothes were clever clothes, too; for each dress that was new there were several that had been "remodeled" as she said, a much more impressive word than "made over."

Any woman can understand how a skirt, that has been turned up side down and has had pleatings of a contrasting material put in on the sides to finish the fullness, is much more fascinating than a mere bought from the store full skirt could be. And a "perfectly ravishing" (I quote from Kitty, but it was) blouse, made from an automobile veil and the remnants of a crepe de chine petticoat, dyed pink, may be discussed for half an hour; whereas the same blouse, born in a box at a shop, could be worthy of only a few minutes' consideration.

"But how accomplished you must be with your needle!" I exclaimed, right away.

"Oh, no," she said, "I can't sew a stitch. Mamma does all my things for me."

Here was a nightgown that mamma had embroidered; there was a lovely slinky silk sweater that mamma had knit; dresses that mamma had made or made over; boudoir caps that mamma had managed from the merest scraps; silk stockings with spider-web darns which Kitty defied me to detect; chiffons and silks that mamma had cleaned in gasoline; organ-

dies and fine mulls that mamma had washed in starch water.

"I never have any laundry nor cleaning bills," Kitty bragged, "mamma does all of my things, she is perfectly fine at it."

"How lovely to have a mamma," I said. "What a tufthunter job to be one," I thought.

"Oh, of course," Kitty answered my exclamation, casually.

"Only," I asked, "does mamma ever find time to do anything else?"

"She keeps house, but if she didn't have my things to attend to she wouldn't have anything to do with her spare time. She loves to sew and fuss and all that. She says I have the hardest part of it, earning the money to buy the things. I get fifty dollars a month and sometimes papa thinks I should help some at home, but mamma won't hear to it. She says if a daughter of hers has courage enough to work she guesses she can have the money she earns for her clothes."

"But," I gasped, "fifty dollars a month for clothes! All of it?"

"I buy my luncheons and pay car fare. Mamma wants me to take my lunch, but I can't stand cold soggy stuff, and besides it looks cheap."

We were hanging her things up by that time. They overflowed the little closet in Pat's room,—he has had

to move into the living-room to sleep while she is here, — and into my closet and, even then, some of the dresses had to be hung on the walls of Pat's bedroom.

"Only," I said, at last, "I've been thinking. You work all the year, and your mamma works all of her spare time, just for clothes. You could do so nicely with half as many and then each of you would have to work only half as long, and then —"

"Do you know," Kitty interrupted, "you remind me a lot of Mazie. She is my best friend. She's awfully odd."

"Tell me about her," I urged, because I do like to hear about folks. "Is she pretty?"

"Pretty!" scoffed Kitty. "Well, I should say not; and she is always throwing it up at me that Cleopatra wasn't beautiful. Roy has kind of a case on her, but if he marries her I'll never speak to him again as long as I live, nor to her, either."

"Only — I thought you said she was your best friend?"

"She is. But she's funny. She is always telling me my things look nice in the back."

"Well —" I pondered, "but — don't they?"

"Don't they?"

"Yes, don't they look nice in the back?"

"Of course, but she never says anything about the front. When I got this suit, just last week it was, she said: 'My dear, it is beautiful in the back!' That's

every last word I could get out of her, and mamma had been simply slaving on it for two weeks."

"Perhaps," I suggested, "she thinks you can't see the back; perhaps she is merely trying not to be obvious."

Kitty looked at me and shook her head. "You are an awfully lot alike," she sighed, "though, of course, you don't look alike. Mazie is stunning. That's her type, you know. She goes in for it, has to to keep from being homely. I'm glad I don't have to, it costs lots more. She is literarily inclined, too, but she can't get books from the library because she says no matter how up to the minute a girl is she looks dowdy packing books around. She says to imagine Theda Bara packing library books around."

"Theda Bara?" I inquired. "Who is she?"

"Well, for Mercy Sakes!" Kitty said, and shook her head as if it were quite useless to try to carry on a conversation with one who had sunk to such depths of ignorance. Then, "But you know, she is the vampire woman in the movies."

"Oh," I answered, greatly relieved, "I never did care much about vampires."

"Mazie pities them," Kitty answered, "but I don't. I think they should be ashamed of themselves, that's what I think. Mazie goes to all the Theda Bara pictures because she always kills herself or gets killed in the end; and Mazie says they are a good moral lesson

to show girls what becomes of women like that, but I say who cares what becomes of them. I don't think it is nice to care. Mazie's philosophy of life and mine are different. What is your philosophy of life?"

"I haven't any."

"Haven't any!" exclaimed Kitty, quite as if I had said I did not have a pocket handkerchief.

"What is Mazie's," I questioned, "and yours?"

"Mazie is very oriental, she wears a jade ring and burns incense and things like that and she has a lovely oriental cozy corner in their parlor, so she gets hers out of the book by Omar Khayyám. It's, 'Eat, drink and be merry to-day, for to-morrow you may die.'"

"Oh," I said.

"You see," continued Kitty, "there was a lady lecturer at the Y. W. C. A., and we girls got roped in for it because Mr. Watkins, he's the man we work for, got roped in and had to buy a lot of tickets; so he gave them to us and we were afraid he might ask us about it, so we had to go once. And she said it was absolutely indispensable for girls to have a philosophy of life. She said Jack London said so."

"Jack London!" I said. "What does he know about it?"

"He is a big author," explained Kitty, as she had explained Theda Bara, but with less surprise, "and so then Mazie and I got ours."

"And yours is?" I questioned.

"I got mine off a calendar Uncle Roy gave me,— it was stingy of him to give me that old thing,— but it said: 'Be good sweet maid and let who will be clever.' Roy says I took it because it was so easy. He says his is to make the best of things."

"Why not," I suggested, "make things better instead?"

"I thought," accused Kitty, speaking again as if we were discussing handkerchiefs, "that you said you didn't have one."

"I haven't," I answered. "I don't approve of having a positive philosophy. It is too much like using a transfer pattern to paint a picture —"

Kitty interrupted: "You're lots like Mazie," she said, "she is always saying things that don't really mean anything, and she disapproves of things, too. I think you'd like **Mazie.**"

For some reason I was growing a bit weary of Mazie. I walked to the window. For a too long time Pat had been quiet out under the trees.

"Pat," I called, "what are you doing?"

"Helping Tony."

"But what is Tony doing?"

"Oh,— nothing," said Pat.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Tony came this morning and found all of my family and me out in the back yard washing clothes. All of my family was turning the wringer, and I was sloppy and frowsy and steamy and in an altogether horrid condition.

"Where's Kitty?" so he greeted us.

"Dressing," I answered.

"I've come to borrow her for the day," said Tony. He had on a linen suit, immaculate, and was carrying a wicker lunch basket and a camera.

"A picnic?" questioned all of my family, eying the basket.

"Old sport," I said hastily, "run into perch-edifice, will you, and smash the clothes down in the boiler?"

"I suppose," said Tony guardedly, "that you won't be through with — that in time to go with us."

"No."

"Sorry."

Just then Kitty came out. She had on a white dress and her rose pink silk sweater, and a big pink and white hat and white shoes and stockings. She looked as cool and delicious as a strawberry sundae.

"Is there anything I could do to help?" she asked, tentatively.

"Not anything," I assured her, straightening from the tub and wiping my hands on my wet calico apron and trying to look as much like a washerwoman as possible. When one has to play a part I believe in playing it thoroughly. I succeeded, I am sure, for she and Tony went laughing away, forgetting even a conventional good-by.

"You look —" began all of my family, with caution, when he returned to the wringer.

"Yes," I agreed, as I rubbed away on one of Kitty's white skirts, "yes, I'd like to be a fiend in human form, but I haven't spunk enough. I'm a mamma."

"A — what?" questioned all of my family, wrinkling his nose with worry.

"There are two classes of folks in the world," I said, "the submerged and the submergers, and all of the submerged belong to the mamma class, and it is their own fool fault."

"Wisdom?" questioned all of my family.

"Just talk," said I.

I didn't feel much better about it until the washing was all hanging out on the lines. I am sure there is nothing at all that gives one such a comfortable, "something accomplished something done" feeling as does a long line of snowy white clothes, hanging out in the sun to get whiter.

Mr. Macelwayne and I were sitting on the porch watching the sunset when Kitty and Tony came home this evening. She had her arms filled with wild rose branches; Tony was carrying her hat and the sunlight was snarling in her hair and she looked as fresh and as dainty and a few shades prettier than she had looked this morning.

"See," said Mr. Macelwayne, as they came down the path beneath the big green trees, with a piece of pink and gold sky for a background, "see — what a picture they make."

I saw. "Yes," I said.

"She *is* so pretty," said Mr. Macelwayne.

"Yes," I agreed.

"And generous with her beauty," he said, next, "and kind to Tony. She amuses him. I am grateful to her for it."

"Yes," I said.

He turned and looked at me, and then he patted my shoulder in that way he has. "Dear child," he said, "you know, don't you, you must know that Tony cares only to look at her, quite as one cares to have a beautiful porcelain or picture about?"

I wonder has my secret been there so plainly, all the while, for folks to read without even running? Does the green shine so gaudily right through the gray of my eyes?

It is not Kitty, the person, of whom I am jealous.

It is Kitty the pretty picture; Kitty who simply by living can give pleasure so easily. It isn't what she takes that I could cry about; it is what she gives. It is so good to give. And when I realize that all my trying and thinking counts for less in the sum of pleasure-giving than does the contour of Kitty's pink and white profile, it makes me see things crookedly. And when folks see things crookedly it means just one thing; not that the great General Manager has jerked things cross wise over night, but that they, themselves, are contorted.

And I am crooked myself, all twisted out of shape by selfishness. Should I care what gives Tony pleasure, so that he has it? Should I grudge Kitty Mr. Macelwayne's gratitude? I did not like it when they were grateful to me. They seem to have forgotten that now. I am glad.

My set of Turgénieff came today. They had to be ordered from the east so it has taken them a long time to come. I have never been less happy over a box of books. I have not unpacked them yet; they are standing in the living-room beside Kitty's big trunk.

I want a new dress, dull green, soft clinging material, with a short full skirt and a deep collar that comes like a cape over my shoulders and deep cuffs. I don't want the collar and cuffs stiff, like on my best brown, I want them soft crêpe and hemstitched. And

to wear with it I want a pair of silk stockings to match, silk all the way, not boot silk; and a pair of pumps, shining as blackberries, trimmed with dull kid around the tops, like the ones Kitty has. My feet are much smaller than Kitty's and her feet look pretty dressed up, so I think mine would. And I want a brown suit for winter, trimmed with brown fur; and I want high brown shoes and a little brown perky hat with some green about it. I want a white net spree dress, with touches of yellow; and I want — How silly I am! And yet — I am so tired of being just a funny little frump.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

We all went over to the other mountain to-day, in the automobile. Kitty wore a pale blue dress, smocked and trimmed with white and a big blue hat with quantities of veil. I wore my green striped gingham. I had washed and ironed it fresh for the occasion and I had thought it might not look unattractive. But it did. I wore my Chinaman basket bonnet. But it did, too. Rowdy, that is how I looked.

About noon we stopped at the Snyders' house and asked if we could buy something to eat. They are newcomers on the mountain so I had not met Mrs. Snyder before. She was most hospitable. She said she would not sell us anything, but for us all to come right in and wait until dinner was ready.

I was the only one who went in. Kitty and Tony went down to the brook. Pat and Mr. Macelwayne went away somewhere with Mr. Snyder,—he is not the good morning man,—and I went in to help Mrs. Snyder with the dinner. The kitchen was hot. There were flies. I never did have less fun than I had helping prepare that dinner.

Mrs. Snyder is little and wispish and garrulous.

She wears her hair pulled back so tightly from her face that it draws all of her features out of place and gives her a haunted, hunted expression. But her hair was not tidy. There were loose ends sticking out. All about her there were loose ends sticking out of places that gaped.

Before she married "him," she said, she had had money of her own. She had earned it by helping babies to be born. Such a lot she knew about babies being born. Such a vast experience had she had with operations. She told me about all of them, I think. Details. When dinner was finally ready I was not at all hungry.

"Well," said Mrs. Snyder, as she gave the finishing touches to the table, "all is, you and me'll have to drink out of our cups, fer they ain't saucers enough to go round."

Kitty and Tony came into the hot kitchen; sat down to the table; glanced about them at the steaming dishes and the swarms of flies; pushed back their chairs and fled. It was intolerably rude, but then the kitchen was intolerable. Mr. Macelwayne and Pat and I stuck it out bravely and ate bravely, sour bread, salt pork, and all. Mr. Macelwayne even offered to help with the dishes but Mrs. Snyder drove him out saying that she would have no men folks mussing about in her kitchen.

"What'a you think," she inquired, sternly, as we

were clearing the table, "about these here goings on over there?"

"These here goings on over where?" I questioned.

"T'other mountain. I ain't surprised, now that I've saw her, neither. It's her and her kind that puts it hard on me and you and us kind. Though how she ever come to be livin' 'way out alone on the mountain — reckon the kid explains that, though —"

"Oh," I interrupted, "please, Mrs. Snyder, wait a bit and let me explain. It is I that live by myself on the other mountain, with the little boy. Miss Mitchell has been there only a short time. She is visiting me. So, you see, if there have been any goings on, it is I who have been — going."

"You!"

I nodded.

"Well, then," said she, with crisp decision, "'sall a lie and I'll tell them backbiters to their faces next they come gabbin' to me. Her, now! But you,— you wouldn't be up to wrong doin' no sooner 'en me myself."

I wonder why I did not feel more complimented. I wonder.

I picked up some scraps of paper and began to wipe the plates off with them, before putting the plates into the dishpan.

"Hi," screamed Mrs. Snyder, "don't do that'a way. We wash 'em in jest a speck of water with

the grub on 'em for the hogs. Hog soup, I call it, they —"

Right then something turned flop over in my stomach. I was sick. I went to the window and just missed putting my hand on a buzzing writhing mass of fly paper. I ran to the door, got outside in the hot beating down sun and fainted for the first time in my life.

The next thing I knew I was lying in a cool soft place and some one kissed my forehead. I opened my eyes. I was lying on the moss, down by the brook, and Mr. Macelwayne was beside me.

I felt fearfully ashamed, of course, and I began at once to apologize and explain: "It was so stuffy and steamy, in there," I said, "and Mrs. Snyder talked on such unsavory subjects. But I am quite right now. Please don't tell the others — please?"

"The others know," he answered, "except Pat. He is up in the barn."

"But," I asked, "where are they?" It did seem to me, since they knew, they should be showing some interest.

"I cleared them out of here," he said savagely. I had never heard him be savage before. It nearly frightened me.

I sat up. Beside me was a small leather-covered flask: "What's that?" I asked.

"Brandy — I was just going to give you some —"

"But where did you get it?"

"Tony had it in his pocket," he answered, quite casually.

I closed my eyes again. "Is this," I thought, "the way folks feel just before the strings snap that hold their hearts together?"

"Phyllis!" said Mr. Macelwayne, "Phyllis!" He had never called me Phyllis before. It sounded odd to hear him doing it. Then I realized that the voice he was using was a frightened voice so I opened my eyes again.

"Are you all right?" he asked, still using the frightened voice. "I thought you had fainted again. I thought —"

"No," I answered, "I didn't faint. But — the brandy?"

He reached for the bottle and began to unscrew the top.

"No, no," I protested, "I don't want it. But — did I understand? Surely I heard wrong. Did you say Tony had it, in his pocket?"

He looked puzzled but he still spoke casually: "Yes," he said, "he had it with him."

"Why, Mr. Macelwayne," I said, "Tony and brandy. Don't you *care!*"

He looked at the flask in his hands as if he had never before seen a flask. He looked at me. I was not brave enough to try to read what was written in

his eyes; but his lips smiled, the sort of smile a man might manage if he were to waken some morning and find that, over night, his family had buried him neatly in a tomb.

"I had forgotten," he said, "Great Good Lord! I had forgotten."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

"If I tell you something," said Kitty to me this morning, "will you promise not to tell?"

"Surely," I answered, because I had no notion that Kitty could tell me anything I'd have the least desire to tell to anyone.

"Well, you know that brandy Tony had yesterday? I gave it to him. The bottle fits into my dressing-case and papa likes to have me carry a little when I go traveling. Tony has had it in his pocket for three days, or had until yesterday, and never unscrewed the top, even."

"Then," I managed, "he has told you his trouble?"

"Oh, yes," said Kitty lightly; "he has told me what an old fusser Mr. Macelwayne is, too. Tony was awfully mad because Mr. Macelwayne poured it out, yesterday. He says he won't trust him. He says I am the only person who ever did trust him. Trust, he says, makes all the difference. He is very romantic."

I asked what seemed to me to be the most important question, first: "Have you any more brandy with you?"

"No, of course not."

"But how can you be positive that he did not touch that you gave him?"

"I am, absolutely positive," she said, and smiled, a queer enigmatical smile.

"How did you dare," I questioned next, "however did you dare to do it? It seems to have come out all right. But the risk! Supposing!"

"I trusted him," said Kitty, and smiled again.

Right then we heard Tony come singing up the path. Kitty went out to meet him. I sat down by the window and looked at the mountains and thought about trust for twenty minutes. I tried to think of Kitty's trust for Tony as a wonder thing, tried to be grateful to her for having such large supplies of it and for giving it away, free, boosting all the while with proverbs about fools and angels, but at that I did not succeed very well.

Kitty came in to get her parasol. She and Tony were going for a walk.

"Kitty," I said, "I am going to tell Mr. Macelwayne what you have just told me. He is unhappy now, and that will make him happy."

"You promised not to tell," said Kitty.

"When a whole promise won't do any good, and a broken promise will do much good," I answered, "I believe in smashing them."

"You're lots like Mazie," deplored Kitty.

"I am going to tell him."

"I trusted you," she accused.

"Kitty, dear," I said, "you carry a superfluous amount of trust about with you. But why do you care if I tell Mr. Macelwayne? It will make him like you better."

She paused to consider: "Think so?"

"Sure of it."

"Well, then I guess I don't care, only I hope he doesn't go and tell Tony."

"I'll ask him not to. He won't," I assured her.

"What about a superfluous amount of trust now?" mocked Kitty.

I blushed. I could feel the silly thing on my face and neck and behind my ears.

"Trust," said Mr. Macelwayne, when I had finished telling him the story of Kitty's triumph,—or was it Tony's triumph?—"is a very beautiful thing."

"Yes," I agreed. I was astonished. I had expected that the news would make him happy. It seemed to have made him merely aphoristic.

He did not say anything more so I matched his remark with one of equal originality: "And so simple," I said.

He smiled. "Yes," he answered.

It seemed to me that it was time for some enthusiasm, so: "Dear little Kitty," I said, "supposing that, after all the worry, she has found the key, the easy key to helping Tony."

Mr. Macelwayne was not responsive so I continued to enlarge on the beauty of Kitty's conduct. "Don't you think so too?" I finished, at last, rather weakly.

"Dear child," said Mr. Macelwayne, "the bottle I emptied yesterday had been filled with cold tea."

"Oh-o-o!" I said, stupidly enough.

"Rather," said Mr. Macelwayne, "rather like a comic supplement to the Declaration of Independence, isn't it?"

"What did Tony say about it?" I managed.

"We have not mentioned it."

"Shall I tell Kitty?"

"I think not," he answered, "her belief in him may do him some good; her disbelief could do no one any good."

So when Kitty asked me, later, what Mr. Macelwayne had said I replied that he had said that trust was a beautiful thing.

"I think he said something mean about me, the way you act," Kitty accused.

"No, not mean," I protested.

"Well,—you've acted awfully funny ever since you saw him."

"I haven't felt awfully funny," I assured her. I had not.

Of a sudden, to my intense astonishment, she began to laugh: "Oh, I know now," she gasped, "I know."

"Know — what?"

"Of course! He found out that there was tea in that bottle and you both think Tony fooled me. I put that in there myself—" she went off into another gasping giggle.

"But—" I began weakly, "you said —"

"Did you think I was a fool?" she demanded.

"Yes," I said, "I thought so."

"You see," she explained later, "that is how I knew he hadn't unscrewed the top. If he had even smelled it he would have found out and then he'd have been perfectly furious at me 'cause he made such a fuss about my trust and all that. But I wouldn't have cared, because if he is going to be an old brandy fiend I don't want him."

"Do you — want him?" I asked. "I — hadn't known."

She tipped her pretty little chin down a bit and a soft pink flush lit her flowerlike face: "Oh, of course I didn't mean exactly that. But I do like him an awfully lot. He is so handsome and romantic. I think he likes me, too. He says I am refreshing. I don't know whether that's nice or not. Would you like it if he said that about you?"

I had not liked it, particularly, when he had said that about me, but I did not tell Kitty.

"Well," I answered, "many pleasant things are refreshing: cold baths —"

"I think you are horrid," she interrupted. "I'm

sure Tony never meant I was like a cold bath. Why! That wouldn't be modest!"

Kitty has gone to bed now and I have been out of doors for a while listening to the stars laugh. At first I was not quite sure whether they were laughing or crying, they were doing such a tremendous amount of twinkling about something, but after I had listened for a time I found that they were laughing, so then I laughed too about trust and temptations, and such sorts of ridiculous abstractions.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Kitty came into the kitchen when all of my family and I were washing the breakfast dishes this morning — we have been very tidy since her arrival — and remarked that she could not see why in the world we had the hammock in the house. And I explained to her that we had it in the house to lie in because, when one was out of doors one could lie on the ground, and that was why in the world.

“Well,” she answered, “I can’t lie on the ground, so I think I’ll move the hammock out. Pat, you come and help me.”

“I’m helping Phyl,” objected all of my family, “and anyway why can’t you lie on the ground? Anybody can lie on the ground. It’s there, ain’t it?”

“Isn’t he rude.” It was an affirmation rather than a question.

“Run on, old scout,” I said, “and help Kitty. I’ll finish up here.”

“No,” he argued, “we’re not to the finishing up yet, we’re just started. I’ll stay and help you.”

“He never minds you, does he?” said Kitty.

“Yes, sometimes,” I answered, “and sometimes I

mind him, so it comes out about even." Mind, as Kitty used it, is a word that has ever had a singularly insignificant place in Pat's and my vocabularies.

"It is a wonder," said Kitty, "that he isn't much meaner than he is."

Mean seemed such an odd word to use in connection with my good-natured sunny-faced boy that I just paused and pondered for a moment and answered nothing at all. Pat banged the silverware viciously.

"Or else," continued Kitty, "that he isn't a sissy-boy."

"Sissy-boy!" sputtered all of my family.

Kitty paid no attention to his sputter. She never does pay any attention to Pat. "Tony and Mr. Macelwayne and I were talking about him last night," she said, "and they thought a few years at some boys' school would straighten him out all right. They said of course, as yet, he was really only a baby—"

"Baby!" exploded all of my family.

"But that when he was a few years older he'd need a stronger hand. You do spoil him awfully, you know. Of course now, when he is so young, nobody pays much attention to his impudence—"

"But Kitty," I interrupted and remonstrated, "Pat is right here. Did you think he had gone out of the room?"

Kitty sniffed. I have read about people who sniffed, but never before did I meet anyone who

actually did it. She does it very daintily, of course, — she does everything very daintily,—raises her shoulders a trifle as she does it, and then drops them with a gesture indicative of shedding all responsibility.

We heard Tony singing. Kitty moved towards the door: "Do hurry and come out," she invited, with no enthusiasm, and disappeared.

"I just naturally hate her," declared all of my family, his face the color of newly boiled beets.

"Consuming good energy hating," I pondered; "why not save it and send it to your mind to put in your invention."

"Talking about us behind our backs! Calling names! I just naturally don't believe they did it. I'm going to ask 'em."

" 'Tattle, tattle, tattle-tale,' " I chanted.

"Yes, sir, I am. I'm going to ask 'em."

" 'Riding on a slippery rail.' "

"I'm going right out now and ask Tony did he say I was a baby, an'—an'—" He threw down the tea-towel and started toward the door.

"Of course," I said, trying to make it casual, "you must do as you think best about it. But if you do go tattling you'll be a barbarian and I think I couldn't care to associate with you very much, afterwards."

"Well—" all of my family hesitated, deliberated, picked up the tea-towel, "well—then I won't. Only—you don't 'sociate with me such an awful lot, any-

way, Phyl. Not any more. Oh,"— furiously, "I *told* you she'd just spoil everything!"

"Not everything," I disagreed because, of course, he did exaggerate when he said that she had spoiled everything. She has not. No mere mortal could spoil July.

Each day, since she came, the King and Queen have honored us with their majestic presences. She has not spoiled their glory. Each evening we have had a sunset and God, this month, has detailed Gauguin to do the sunsets, and she has not spoiled those. Along the trails the salal bushes have hung dainty pink and white lanterns among the glistening green of their foliage, for fairies' lawn parties, I think; and on the slopes tall stalks of fox-gloves, lavender, pink and white, are swaying and bending under the weight of their blooms; crowds of larkspurs, sapphire color; hosts of wild forget-me-nots, sky dyed; trailing vines, fragrant with summer ripe berries; bright dandelions, scattered from the rainbow's pot of gold, upset again since spring; — all unspoiled.

The pale blue mornings, white haze draping on the hills; the brilliant blue, heat-heavy afternoons with an occasional vagrant cloud cruising through the sky, lazy cloud that drops its shadow down and drags it across the fields and over the lake; the soft smoke-blue twilights, color-ruffled by sunset tints; the deep blue nights, their tangle of stars seeming so close

that one feels if only one's tip-toes were a bit taller one could easily reach up and tidy the Milky Way, or play with the bow of the yellow young moon; all these have been quite unspoiled by Kitty. Of the things she has spoiled, some, the less I think of them, the less I say of them, the better.

Now I am going out and find all of my family and carry him off, quite alone — just we two together — and associate with him all of this afternoon. "You don't 'sociate with me such an awful lot anyway, Phyl, not any more." Little sinner! The plaintiveness of that remark almost persuades me to forget that it is wholly his fault that we have not been more together. Many days, of late, I have been quite alone and lonesome for him.

Mr. Macelwayne has been making frequent trips to the city, the past two weeks, leaving early in the morning and coming home late at night. Several times he has taken Pat with him. The last time they went to the city Mr. Macelwayne brought Pat a watch. He is too little to own such a scrumptious watch. It has made him vain.

"Speaking of jewelry," he said, yesterday, when we had not been speaking of jewelry at all, "did I have any on me when you found me, old sport?"

"Not any."

"Ye'a but are you sure?"

"Positive. Why?"

"Nothing, only Mr. Macelwayne said most usually babies did have rings, or locketts, or something."

"If you had any, dear," I answered, "the gypsies had glomed it before I found you."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

"It weren't," said Mr. Miser, when all of my family and I went to call on him yesterday, "it weren't the God's blessin' me that I objected to. It were the notoriety."

"When," questioned all of my family, his eyes a bit too wonder wide, "did God bless you, Mr. Totenberry?" There was, too, just a shade of emphasis given to the pronoun; a shade which I deplored, but Mr. Miser seemed not to notice it.

"I ain't claimin'," he responded, "that He did bless me, that's not here nor there, all I ever claimed was that Nooney was tryin' to make me notorious."

"Down on the scow, was it?" questioned all of my family.

"It were," answered Mr. Miser, "it were down on the scow where I was livin' durin' one portion of my life. Now this here Nooney were a ornery, long nosed, puny faced fellow, preacher by trade, but he give over and went to makin' paint. It were right after him and me had some words concernin' a job of paintin' he done on my scow, unsolicited, pink and blue,—Drat! — that he took it into his head that all of the souls in scow town were goin' tee-totally to waste and claimed they was in need of savin' so he

takes over the job of savin', unsolicited, same as he done with the paintin'.

"But he were slick. He shorley were slick. Vespers, that's how he put it, vespers. Yes'ur, vespers. Painted signs and stuck 'em all over scow town, sayin' vespers 'ud be held at his home, sixth scow from the end of O'Riley's dock number two, at five o'clock Sunday evenin', and all interested was cordially invited to attend.

"I ain't claimin' they weren't them that knew the meanin' of the word; I'm jest claimin' that it drew bigger 'un a less oncommon word would of drew, sech as preachin', or prayer meetin' or church services. Some claimed they was to be refreshments served. I suspicioned myself, 'count of what he 'ud said to me concernin' the savin' of souls, that there might be some preachin', but bein' interested in a way to see if Nooney could preach any better 'un he could paint I attend.

"He couldn't. Cluttered up his words worser 'un his paint and tried to scare us by alludin' frequent to the bad place and suggestin' the end of the world were near to hand. He made a' awful effort, I'll give him that, but no conversions to my knowledge. I ain't claimin' to know about the preachin' trade, but I claim that you can't save souls by first insultin' em. Also I claim that standin' there wearin' a white tie and the Good Book open afore him, he took chances with

contumely that he wouldn't of took, for his life, in his ordinary clothes up on the dock.

"Most would of left, I reckon, but same as me, we sat a-waitin' for the vesper to begin. Which it did'unt. The only thing passed were a china saucer empty, but with the suggestions that we might throw in small change.

"After that come a prayer. He done some better on the prayer, puttin' more effort into it than he had with the preachin', more effort and less contumely. He asked for blessin's on everythin', startin' with the president of the U. S. of Americy and the flag, and comin', by degrees, down to them present. And then, says he, and I'm speakin' the truth as shore as my name is Andrew Totenberry, says he: 'And in particular, O, Lord,' he says, 'bless our friend and neighbor old Andrew Totenberry. He is sore in need of your blessin', O, Lord,' says he, and some more to the same effect.

"Shortly after I spoke to him, in private, concernin' it and he apologized very pretty, same as he'ud done about paintin' my scow pink and blue, meanin' no harm, he says, and brotherly love, he says, and the like of that. Bein' a peaceable man by nature I give over, merely sayin' that, if the same occurred again, oncomfortable things might also occur in the same spirit of brotherly love.

"Next Sunday he advertised vespers again. Some

of the women folks went, havin' nothin' else to do, I take it, and I made a point of droppin' in, long about prayer time, to make sure nothin' underhanded was goin' on.

"He went through the prayin' all right, includin' them lost at sea and workin' underground, this time, comin' down to them present and then, says he, 'O, Lord,' says he, 'bless all them present with the exception of old Andrew Totenberry, don't bless him, O, Lord,' he says, 'Amen.'"

Mr. Miser paused, shook his head meditatively, sighed, and continued: "Swum, right out, though, cute as Christmas, and went around back bitin' ever after. Claimed I did'unt know my own mind. Claimed I resented bein' blest or unblest, equal. I never. It were the noteriety. 'Noteriety,' I says, 'is an oncommon oncomfortable state for a ordinary man.'"

"But what," questioned all of my family, "did he swim out of, cute as Christmas?"

"Out of the river, where I chucked him," replied Mr. Miser.

"Oh," said all of my family.

"Dear me!" said I.

"Did you," questioned all of my family, again, his eyes wider than ever, his voice fairly shaking with awe, "did you chuck many people into the river, Mr. Totenberry? Often?"

"Oh, off and on," answered Mr. Miser, lightly, "off and on."

"It is lucky, isn't it, old sport," said all of my family as we were walking home, "that wee river is too small for Mr. Miser to chuck folks into?"

"Very lucky," I agreed.

"What then," questioned all of my family, "do you suppose he meant by that last he said to you? Wee river is the only river around here."

Mr. Miser's last remark to me had been: "Little gal, you're lookin' peakeder than I have ever saw you look. Chuck 'em in the river, there's a old man's advice, chuck 'em in and let 'em sink or swim and forgit 'em."

"I suppose," I answered Pat's question so, "that he did not mean folks, exactly, dear, to be chucked. I suppose he thought I had some troubles or worries that were fussing me, and that he meant for me to get rid of them."

"But you haven't any troubles and worries, or have you, Phyl?"

"It troubles and worries me," I evaded, "when you are rude to Kitty."

"Oh,—*that*," said all of my family and then he took out his watch and announced the time.

When we got home I picked up my mirror. I do look "peaked" rather. It seems to me that my face has something of the all eyes expression about it,

that Mrs. Snyder's face had. What was it I said about her face? "Hunted, haunted." I wonder whether it was not her tight hair at all? I wonder whether she was harboring and hiding and evading thoughts, as I have been harboring, and hiding and evading thoughts for the past weeks; thoughts that slink in and out through the fabric of my mind like a poisoned needle, dragging an odious black thread behind them.

So hard have I tried to pay no attention to the prickings, but, day by day, stitch by stitch, the thread is working out a pattern which can not be ignored, which can not be evaded, which can not be ripped out by ridicule.

These friends of mine, these folks whom I have liked and loved and with whom I have shared Pat, and perch-edifice and myself —

No, I won't write it. Not yet. After all, I have really nothing to write. What a snakey, hissing word is that word "suspicion."

I feel oddly old to-night, not as if I had grown old but as if I had been born old.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

The moon is lop-sided to-night, and lazy, and shines in a half-hearted way, and most of the stars have gone to bed and the others are too tired to twinkle, and I suppose the truth of it all is that I am sleepy,—sticky-eyed, yawny-mouthed sleepy. But sleep is tyrannical with me so I dare not yield to so much as a cat's nap, for to-night is Kitty's last night here, she leaves early in the morning, and it would seem far from polite for me to be snoring away when she comes home from her walk with Tony.

That is what I am trying to be, polite, not priggish, not prudish, not punctilious, not any disagreeable that begin with "p." And yet—it is so very late. I am worried, some. But then I may put my worry under the head of politeness, too, for when a guest starts for a walk, very early in the evening, and is still walking at half past twelve o'clock, it is surely merely polite to worry and wonder a bit.

Mr. Macelwayne was doing that, worrying and wondering a bit, when he left here more than an hour ago: "Odd—those children haven't come in," he said, and I laughed at him.

"The trouble," he said, next, "is the moonlight."

I wonder what he meant by that? It seems not to mean anything, but he never does say meaningless things. I thought about it all the time that I was trying to rub the peakedness out of my face (I read in a book that olive oil was excellent for massage purposes so I've been trying it, but I can't see any improvement. Kitty is going to send me some real massage cream from the city when she gets home), but I did not reach any sensible conclusion.

Mr. Macelwayne and all of my family and I had the laziest, most pleasantly stupid late afternoon and evening. That is one of the things I like best about Mr. Macelwayne, when one is tired one may act that way as much as one pleases. It is different with Tony, one can't act tired with him, he bores so easily.

To-day, owing to Kitty's dainty abhorrence of packing anything even slightly soiled into her trunk, was a strenuous day. I was out under the trees trying to let the sunset rest me when Mr. Macelwayne came.

"Tired?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered.

He sat down beside me on the grass, and the blue things turned to amethyst, and the amethyst turned to grey, and the grey turned into dark night blue and the moon stepped out and silvered it all, and words did not seem necessary so we did not use any, until —

Right there I went to sleep. I suppose I would have slept right there, all this night through with my nose in the ink of that "until," if Kitty had not stumbled over Pat's invention which he had left in a villainous position, directly in front of the door. But I am glad he did leave it there, and I am glad that Kitty did stumble over it and waken me, for the poor child was sorely in need of some petting to-night.

The first thing I saw when I opened my eyes was the clock. I won't tattle the time. The next thing I saw was Kitty, standing like a naughty child near the door, one shoe in each hand, and her face almost as white as the clock's face.

"We — walked — so far," she stammered, "so far, without thinking 'cause the moon was so pretty, and then — we had to walk back, and — and I'm so tired." She sat flat down on the floor, her feet sticking straight out in front of her and began to cry.

Of course I went and put my arms around her and gave her my shoulder on which to cry, and of course I kept petting her and saying, "There, there," and begging her to tell me all about it; but for a long time the sobs were choking so that there wasn't any room for words to come through. Then: "He was awfully mean," she managed.

"There, there. Who was awfully mean?"

"Tony."



I kept petting her and saying, "There, there"—
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I knew that if he tried Tony could be mean, I remembered the funny little frump, and I couldn't think of anything more adequate to say than some more, "There — theres."

"It isn't fair," she sobbed, "it isn't fair. He has been so attentive. So attentive!" She raised her head and looked at me, almost fiercely. "Now hasn't he been attentive? Hasn't he?" she demanded.

"But of course, dear, he has been attentive," I answered.

"Only yesterday," she went on, "only yesterday he said I was so pretty that when he was away from me his eyes ached until he saw me again. Now what would you think he meant by that?"

"I should think," I answered, "that he meant that he liked very much to look at you. Everyone does, Kitty dear, you are so pretty. You know that."

"Pretty!" She almost screamed it, so that I had to caution, "Sh-h-h!" on account of Pat. "Pretty! But what does that get me?"

It seemed an odd way of saying it, but I understood. "It gets you much admiration," I tried to comfort, "and it gives you the ability to give pleasure, and —"

"Admiration! Ability to give pleasure!" Again her voice shrilled high. "Oh, if that isn't just like you! You are — you are —"

"Lots like Mazie?" I prompted, meekly.

She nodded, and went off into another crying fit.

"But, dear," I urged, "you mustn't do this way and get your eyes and nose all red. You must tell me about it. You haven't told me yet, you know, and I am nearly sure that Tony didn't intend to be mean. Tell me about it, maybe I can see another side, or explain or — something. You tell me, now —"

"Tell you," she sobbed, "yes, I will tell you. We walked and walked and walked, he was telling me all about himself so he didn't notice how far we were going and I didn't say anything; but coming home I got so tired, and he put his arm around me to help me, and then when we got to the door he shook hands and said he'd see me in the morning to take me to the train, and said he had enjoyed our friendship and a whole lot of stuff like that, and said that he hoped, when he came back to the city, that he might see me sometimes,— *sometimes*, mind you,— and — and — he never even asked to kiss me good-by!"

I had been kneeling beside her. I sat back on my heels: "But you aren't," I gasped, "you aren't crying like this just because Tony did not ask to kiss you good-by?"

"Oh, you!" The words seemed fairly to come bursting out of her pretty little mouth. "You wouldn't understand! You've never worked! You've never slaved in an office! You've never —" She went on for quite a time, like that, enumerating all the things

I had never done, and finishing with a little half stifled, "you've never loved."

I did not deny any of the undone things and, though I was tempted, I did not pry into the state of her feelings. It seemed to be not any of my business, after all. Too, I noticed that the more I talked to her, and petted her, and urged her to stop crying the harder she cried, so I went into the kitchen and made some coffee.

When I came back she was lying in the hammock, sniffing some and catching her breath, but not sobbing any more. I pulled a chair up beside the hammock and from then, until just now when I tucked her up cozily in bed, we have been drinking coffee and talking.

It is five o'clock now. Kitty's train leaves at seven so I think I'll not go to bed at all. I could not sleep. The thoughts in my mind are running about as crazily as the marbles in Pat's "Pig's in Clover" puzzle; as soon as I think I have one trapped and safe and out of the way, here it comes, bobbing forth again, to roll about and get mixed up with the others. Even the one that is sorry for Kitty, pretty silly little Kitty, won't stay put securely in its place, and —

Just there Kitty called to me. I went into her room. She was sitting up in bed, her eyes shining as if they were making new tears right behind them, her cheeks flame red.

"You remember," she asked, "what you said, once, about promises, how when a whole promise was useless you believed in breaking it?"

I remembered.

"Then," she said, "I am going to break a promise."

It sounded very much like a threat. "No, no," I protested, "please, Kitty, please don't."

"Yes," she insisted, "I am going to. I think you ought to know —"

"No, no!" I protested again. If I had been looking into the two shining barrels of a gun instead of her two shining eyes I am sure I could have been no more frightened. I thought I knew what she was going to tell me, you see. I wanted to put my two hands over my two ears and run away.

"I think you ought to know," she repeated, fairly snapping the words out, "that Tony believes that Pat is his." She stopped snapping words and closed her mouth, as if she had finished.

"Only —" I managed, "his — what?"

"Why," she said, "his son, of course."

"Oh," I said.

She looked at me for a moment keenly, questioningly; sighed, sniffed, and gave it up. "Well, you are a funny girl," she said, and cuddled down into her pillow, and tucked her palm under her cheek, and closed her shining eyes.

"Only," I said, and I know that I was dull about it, "only — isn't that an odd thing for Tony to think, since his son died, years ago?"

"No, he didn't die. Tony found out this summer that he didn't die."

"But there are such a lot of little boys in the world," I insisted, "who — didn't die. Why should he pick on Pat, for his?"

Kitty cuddled deeper into her pillow. "Honestly, Phyl," she said, "I'm too sleepy to talk any more to-night. I'll hardly get any sleep at all, as it is. You can ask them about it to-morrow if you want to. I don't care — now. I don't care for anything."

I felt rather that way myself. As if I did not care for — anything, as if I did not have sense enough left in me to care for anything.

"Good night," I answered.

"I thought you ought to know," she repeated, just before I closed the door.

She thought I should know! She was quite right about it. I should know. But not for the reason that made her think I should know, to-night. But — oh, very much I should know!

It is odd that I should be sitting here writing, in the morning twilight, quite as if my world had not come unscrewed from its hinges. It is odd that the black pattern the needle worked into my mind had not prepared me, more fully, for this. I knew that they were

trying to ferret out something concerning Pat, but I thought — dear Heaven! I thought that they were trying to find that Pat was my own son. If only they might have been able to find that! If only! In my farthest flights of fancy concerning their secret I never thought of anything so madly melodramatic as this. Mad! An excellent word. Mad, quite, quite mad. Next Tony will be thinking, doubtless, that I am his wife whom he had supposed dead all these years. How funny it is, after all. How rackingly funny! If I were a real girl, and had not been born and bred and had all of my being on a cinema screen I think I could sit here in this shivery pale gray light, and laugh and laugh and laugh about it.

Over there, in the east, the sun in letters pink and gold is requesting the audience to wait one moment while the reel is being changed, one minute and they may behold the final scene of this screaming farce.

My part will be, first of all, I suppose, to demand their proofs. Then they will bring forth the proofs, from exhibit A to exhibit Z, and I must defy them, waving the adoption papers —

But no, it isn't funny enough some way. There should be a custard pie in it, and a hose squirting water, and folks falling down. There are always custard pies, and hose, and folks fall down. No, it is not funny enough. Not nearly.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

I have used up August in the silliest stupidest way imaginable, being ill. At least the very kind doctor from the city said I was ill, and since his business in life is distinguishing between folks who are ill and folks who are not ill, it did seem rude to contradict him.

For nearly a week I let him have his own way and say about it, he was such a young doctor I hated to disappoint him, but when Pat began to come into my room on his tip-toes I decided it was time to take matters into my own hands, so I sat up in bed and told that young doctor the truth.

"Doctor," I said, "I don't wish to seem rude nor arbitrary, but I am not ill, not in the least. When folks are ill, you must admit, they hurt somewhere. And I didn't hurt, not anywhere."

I was telling the truth, but he would not believe me at first and we had quite a long argument about it, an argument which lasted several days and would have lasted much longer, I suppose, if I had not got out of bed and dressed and met him at the door when he came to see me and proved to him that the rest of me

was quite right but that my legs acted as if they were dizzy,— tipsy.

He ordered me straight back to bed. I would not go. After a few days we compromised on the words, "run down." I was willing to admit that I was "run down." I felt exactly like that; as if I had been run down by something very heavy, and not only run down but run over by it, and left smashed out, quite flat.

"Overwork," he said, too, and perhaps, though my nerves were remarkably steady, perhaps a bit of overworry.

But how I do prattle about it, and whatever is the good of doing so? I am as bad with my symptoms as Mrs. Snyder was with her operations. I was very tired, and now I am very rested and, as nearly neighbor would say, "thar's an end on it."

While I was tired and was getting rested any number of important things have happened on our mountain: the golden-rod has come to visit, all dressed up with yellow green plumes; the Oregon grape flowers have turned into long clusters of fruit, murky blue; the lacey huckleberry bushes are like elfin Christmas trees, spangled with bright red tiny ornaments; the alder trees, foremost ever in fall fashions, are putting on yellow, and some of the vine maples are blazing scarlet; rose-berries, such excellent strings of rubies they do make when strung on a thread, have come to take the

place of the roses; and our corn is topping nicely and our little green tomatoes are growing up and getting pink.

Other things have happened too: nearly neighbor's cow has a brand new shaky-legged calf; and the men's Jap has left them, after a final fearful row with Tony; and Mr. Macelwayne seems to have grown more than a month older and graver and quieter. Perhaps that has something to do with the Jap's departure; Mr. Macelwayne is doing the cooking now. And Tony has grown more restless, and discontented, and has lost a part of his pleasant manner. Perhaps that has something to do with Kitty's departure.

I have heard from Kitty three times. She sent me the massage cream which I should regard as a luxury but which I seem able to regard only as unimportant, and she sent me two postal cards. One of them had a picture of a grille room on it, and she had written across the chairs and tables: "Come on in, the water's fine!" It seemed to me to be inappropriate but when I showed it to Tony he laughed as if it were a splendid joke. The other card thought she had left her manicure scissors here and asked me to hunt for them and send them to her. It thought, too, that after all I was not so much like Mazie because Mazie had borrowed Kitty's sport skirt to wear and had stretched it all out of shape and had said, when Kitty had called her attention to the stretched condition, that it really

did not matter at all. Kitty was *very* sure that her *dearest* Phyl would *never* act like that.

All of my family just came in, with a big shimmering trout which he informs me, proudly, he is going to cook in a new way, all by himself for my dinner. I hope he doesn't try to stew it, with vegetables, as he did the last one. An inventive turn of mind is a splendid thing, and I'm glad Pat has it, but it is not always fortunate where cooking is concerned.

Besides the trout all of my family brought with him a piece of news: Tony has returned from his hunting trip, he has been gone three days, and he is, so Pat says, "’isgusted," declaring that there are no deer on these mountains (nearly neighbor went for a little walk early yesterday morning and shot a fine big buck), so now they are going back to the city within a few days.

I have said nothing about what Kitty told me. After all, I have thought, it is their business, so it is their place to talk about it first. But now — I wonder? Could it be possible that they might go without telling me? Their silence baffles me. I can see no reason for it, no sense in it.

If Tony were someone else, Mr. Macelwayne for instance, I might think that he had decided to make the sacrifice instead of asking me to make it; that he had decided to go away to his big busy world and leave me my little peaceful world, for mine, unbroken. But Tony is not anyone else, he is not even like anyone

else, most distinctly Tony is Tony, unselfish, truly, about many things but with an absolutely accurate sense of mine and thine. He is fond of Pat and could be much more fond of him, I think, were the pride of proprietorship his. Though that is most natural, most human; all love, except mate love, is influenced, is intensified by ownership. It is odd how the beauty, love, seems ever to walk hand in hand with the ugly, selfishness.

"But," my conscience questions, sternly, with stiff pointing finger, "do you think, if Tony truly believes that Pat is his, that he should go away without a word?"

My common sense answers for me: "No, no!"

"But," probes conscience, again, "if he should seem to be going to do that, if he should say good-by without mentioning it, should you allow him to go? Should you not, in all honesty, tell him that Kitty told you, and ask him about it?"

I don't know what part of me it is that answers that question, but I think it is the part of me that is still tired, the part that is not rested as yet, because all it will do is whine, waveringly, and say: "Oh, don't bother so. Don't fuss. I don't know."

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Tony came down to my house to-night and very solemnly, very seriously and very sweetly too, asked me to marry him. That was his solution, you see. It was a kind solution, though a silly one.

We were out under the big trees and they were sifting some moonlight through, and Tony looked young and earnest as he pleaded, not passionately, no, prettily would be a better word to use to describe his pleadings. He did not mention Pat nor the true reason for his proposal. He spoke about — just me, and himself, and the things he said were dearly pleasant, or might have been, had they been sincere.

“If only, only,” I thought, “the world were quite different; if love meant taking instead of giving; if I were Kitty, now, or if Tony were —”

But he interrupted my if-ing: “Aren’t you going to answer me, at all, little woman?” he asked.

“Dear,” I said, “it is all a mistake. I know. I know that it is the prize package you want, and not the pancake flour —”

He interrupted me again. I had supposed he would understand, but he did not, and he was nearly cross

about it. I could not blame him for that because, when one has just finished an entirely adequate eloquent proposal of marriage, it would be annoying to have the girl go right off talking about mundane things like pancake flour. He suggested that, if I could, I might be serious just for once. Implying not that I was frequently frivolous, but that I was constitutionally, chronically frivolous.

To prove to him that he was wrong about that, and to satisfy him, I became serious, quite stubbornly serious, I fear, because after I had told him what Kitty had told me I insisted upon sticking to that subject, and the point of that subject, Pat.

I would not allow him to pooh-pooh the whole affair as merely a notion of "Unk's" (I wish he wouldn't call Mr. Macelwayne that); I would not listen when he insisted that it was the pancake flour he wanted and not the prize package; and at last by a persistence, fairly pig-headed, I managed to extract most of the truth from him.

They had, really, no proof at all that Pat was Tony's little boy. The woman with whom Tony had left his baby had written Tony a letter,—that long ago mysterious letter which had called Mr. Macelwayne to town on business,—telling him that she had "gotten grace," whatever that might mean, and that the baby had not died when she had told that he had, had not, in fact, to her definite knowledge died at all. Her

explanations, Tony said, were tangled and not very tangible, but the essence of them was that the baby had wandered away, lost or stolen, and she had been afraid to confess her carelessness.

"But we advertised," I told him, "and no one answered, and married brother reported to the police and did all the proper things to do. Had she wanted to find the baby, she surely would have answered."

The explanation for that, Tony said, was simple. He had left her a too large sum of money. The date when she told Tony the baby died was over a year later than the day in March when I had found Pat.

"She still sticks to that date," said Tony, ruefully, "as the time that the baby was lost. Perhaps in seven or eight years, when she has had time to acquire more of that conscience-hurting stuff she calls grace, she will tell us the truth about that."

"Then," I questioned, "in your mind you are sure that Pat belongs to you? Just sure, without any proofs nor anything?"

"The family resemblance is proof enough for anyone," Tony answered.

"Only," I mused, "lots of times folks do look alike who are not any relation. You and Mr. Macelwayne think that I look like Maud Adams, for instance, and yet —"

"That is very different," snapped Tony.

"Is it?" I questioned, and then, when he did not answer that question, I tried another one:

"However did you happen to leave your baby with — with that sort of a woman?" I asked.

"If," he answered, "there were some way in this world to distinguish between *that* sort and the other sort it would be fortunate. It happens that there is no acid test available. The woman was the nurse who took care of Sylvia. She seemed a capable, motherly old person, fond of children and trustworthy. I had to leave the baby with some stranger. How was I to know?"

"Maybe," I answered, "there wasn't any way for you to know. Maybe there wasn't, and yet — if I had a little baby for all mine I am quite sure I couldn't be so — careless with it. Mostly, I think, I would carry it about with me, tight in my arms; but if I had to put it down, then I think I'd be very peculiarly positive that I put it down in a safe place."

"Of course," he answered, sulkily, "you'd take Unk's view of it. He has blamed me consistently, from start to finish. He'll blame me more than ever now for telling Kitty and allowing you to find out the truth."

"He didn't want me to know?" I questioned.

"Not now, not for a while."

"Why?"

"I don't know. I wanted to tell you about it, right

at first, when we first got the letter, but Unk persuaded me not to. He went fussing around about proofs — all that sort of thing."

"Perhaps," I inquired, "perhaps this solution of the difficulty was — his suggestion?"

"Solution? Suggestion?"

"That you should ask me to marry you."

Tony protested. Really I was mistaken about his motive. Really I had him all wrong. Really he did care for me, for myself. Of course, he conceded, he did want Pat, but — well, that was, he didn't want Pat without me, of course, or — at least — what he meant to say was —. On and on he went, like that.

Poor dear, his explanations were as muggy as his proposal had been transparent. Once he got so lost in the fog of them that he quite forgot, floundering about as he was, that it was only I whom he wanted, only I whom he loved, and he said that, anyway, I did have all the law on my side.

Then I felt sorry for him and took hold of his hand and tried to lead him out of the fog. "Dear," I said, "I suppose I have the law on my side, but that, of course, has nothing to do with it. Law can't ever have much to do with folks who are friends. What does matter is that I think, it may be arrogant of me, but I do think that I have the most love on my side. That is why I am going to act in what will seem to you a very selfish manner. But I have thought it

over and over, Tony, during my days of inactivity, over and over, inside and outside, right side and wrong side and up-side-down, and I have decided that, later, if you are still interested in Pat, still believe as you do now, we shall share him. But for the next few years, while he is still a little boy, he must be mine, here with me. Things are so — so — indefinite with you, just now," I finished, uncertainly.

"Alluding to?" he demanded.

I nodded, rather miserably. It did seem mean to twit him, right then, with his weakness and yet it was the sort of thing that had to count, that had to be added up with the other figures in the sum of his fitness to be a father to Pat.

"That's over with," he answered, "done with. Finished."

I wanted to say, "I am sure of it." I wanted to say, "I believe you," or "I know it is." But I couldn't. "I am glad," I said.

He tried to look into my eyes but I turned them away. There seemed to be no reason for him to go prying into my eyes, right then.

"And I used to think," he half mused, "that you were fond of me."

Something extra in his voice made me look up. He was smiling, not bitterly as men are everlastingly smiling in story books, but hurtfully. There is something appealing about Tony's humorous smiles; there is

something almost irresistible about his sorry smiles. I wanted to cuddle him and kiss the hurt place, as I do with Pat sometimes; I wanted to be good to him, especially good to him. So much I wanted to be good to him.

It is odd how love, for days and weeks may slip along, quietly, placidly, and then with no warning at all, and for no reason in particular, or for a reason as tiny as a smile, or a tear, or a stubbed toe, spurt out like a — geyser, I guess will do, only that somehow sounds too soppy. When my love acts that way for Pat if cuddlings and kissings do not seem in order, I usually go and bake him a custard pie. Cuddlings and kissings decidedly were not in order for Tony, right then; a pie seemed even less appropriate, so I had to try what words could do:

"Tony, dear," I said, "I was fond of you and I am fond of you. Everyone is fond of you, everyone who knows you. Pat is, and Kitty was —"

"Kitty," Tony snatched the name away from me, quite greedily, and repeated it, as if he liked it, "Kitty —" Then he looked away, over in the direction where the city is, and his thoughts went that way too, and stayed there for a time, and I sat very quiet so that I might not disturb them.

"She is so pretty," he said to himself, not to me, "and so simple, and so —" he fumbled.

"Refreshing?" I suggested.

He disregarded my suggestion: "Trustful," he finished.

"Yes," I agreed.

I have never cared for "A Hot Time in the Old Town," as a tune, I have ever regarded it as an inferior production; but just then when I heard it coming up the path and knew that all of my family was directly behind it, it seemed to me to be the most invigorating, sturdiest of airs.

Tony uttered an ugly exclamation of annoyance.

"But — why?" I remonstrated. I hate having people annoyed because of Pat.

"I wanted to talk to you alone."

"Yes, I know, but you have talked to me alone."

"Will you think over what I have said, and give me your answer later?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Because," I answered, "I have thought it over, and I have given you my answer."

"Is there some reason," he persisted, "some reason I don't know?"

"There is a very good reason that you do know —"

"That is not a real reason," he interrupted.

"It seems so to me."

"Perhaps," he said, "I can persuade you that it isn't, to-morrow?"

"No," I answered, "no — please not?" I did not

want to go over it all again, to-morrow nor any day. Parts of it had been particularly hard and hurtful.

"Is it because —" he began.

"It is because I can't, because I won't," I was speaking hurriedly for the whistled "Hot Time" was drawing very close, so I think I jumbled some; "I don't love you — not that way. I can't do what you ask me to do. Please, please, dear, don't nag me any more about it."

I don't intend to seem mean about Tony but I rather think it would be hard for him to understand that any woman whom he said he loved did not love him. At any rate he persisted: "I'll not take that as final," he said.

"You must," I urged, "because — because —" frantically I sought about in my mind to find some answer which Tony could understand, some reasonable, tellable thing that would force him to take my answer as final.

He found it for me: "Little woman," he questioned, "you don't mean that you — care for — love someone else?"

"Yes," I answered, "yes, I do, Tony. I do."

"What do you do?" inquired all of my family, interestingly, as he joined us.

"And what do you do," I evaded, "out so late?"

He yawned, widely, "Oh, nothing. Down keeping Mr. Macelwayne company."

"I hope you succeeded in cheering him up a bit," said Tony to Pat, and then, to me: "Unk has been fearfully low of late. Have you noticed?"

"I haven't seen him very often, lately," I answered. It was true. For the past weeks he has seemed, almost, as if he were trying to avoid us.

"Did you have a pleasant evening?" I questioned Pat, after Tony had gone.

"No," said Pat, flatly.

"But you always do have pleasant times with Mr. Macelwayne," I insisted.

"Not always," objected all of my family, "because to-night I didn't. He acted just like I wasn't there."

"Then, dear, you should have come home."

"Ye'a," answered all of my family, aggrievedly, "and I guess I knew it, didn't I? But every time I'd say, 'I got'a go home,' he wouldn't *let* me."

"Nonsense," said I.

"Honest. And last time I just naturally started off anyway and he said wait and he'd tell me a story, so I waited and he did and the story was no good."

"But you always like Mr. Macelwayne's stories."

"Not always," objected all of my family, as he had objected before, "because this one I didn't like. It was no good. Fairy stuff, for kids. All about hearts and things and love."

"It sounds interesting," I primed.

"Well, it wasn't. The folks all had their hearts

on their outsides, carrying 'em around in their hands or something."

"Yes? But what did they do with their hearts? Where — did they put them?"

"I don't know — er — anyway I forget, 'cause along about in there some place, all about hopeless hearts and things, I went to sleep."

Can anything in the world, I wonder, be quite as teasingly trying as a small boy?

CHAPTER THIRTY

All of to-day I have spent, wasted would be the wiser word, waiting for Mr. Macelwayne to come and talk to me and let me talk to him. I even got up a bit earlier than usual this morning because I thought, since we had so many necessary important things to discuss, he might come a bit early. Evidently he did not think that way about it, because he did not come, not at all. It was hard to understand. He has always been so kind.

It is odd, how a month, a mere bunch of days, can muddle one. A month ago, had I wished to see Mr. Macelwayne, wished to talk to him, I'd have taken all of my family or, if all of my family had not been at hand, I'd have gone alone to his camp to see him, without a single silly thought in my mind.

To-day I waited for him to come to me,—and it was a long day stretching itself out into almost unbelievable spans,—first with confident expectings, then with hopings, then, along about sunset time with fearings and, after that, very dismal with disappointment,—waited, with a heart as fluttery and as bustling a show of keeping busy as one of Dickens' foolish

heroines, quite as if I did not have two legs with feet attached for walking.

All of my family complained bitterly of me and my actions, and I did not blame him. It was an Indian summer day, warm blue and bronze, with white thistledown and threads of silver cobwebs sailing through the air; a perfect play day; a day for adventure; not a stay at home day. But at home I stayed.

All of my family fared forth alone, coming home at intervals all day to protest and persuade. He was trying out his invention in wee river and it almost worked, that was, it almost almost worked, and wouldn't I come and see? Up in the ferns he had found a deer's track, "plain as pie," even the most skeptical could not consider the possibility of its being a sheep's track. Wouldn't I come and see? Anyway, now he guessed I'd come because, right down by the log across wee river there were two great big,—honest truly Phyl the very biggest ever were,—dragon flies, and their wings were so shiny in the sun, lots shinier than those we had been watching last week and, as he saw refusal in my face, I knew I loved to watch dragon flies better'n anything, I knew I did.

All day he did not mention Tony nor Mr. Macelwayne and since I was too big a coward to go and find out about them for myself I did not ask Pat

about them. It would not have been quite fair, rather like cheating, it seemed to me.

After we had eaten our dinner, this evening, he took his cap from the peg and said in a cross-patch way: "Well, I'm going down to see whether Mr. Macelwayne has come home, but I guess it's no use to ask you to come along."

"Oh," I answered,, "has Mr. Macelwayne been away?"

"He went for a walk all alone this morning. I was going with him, but he acted kind'a like he didn't want me so then I didn't go. He's acted awful funny, anyway, lately. Don't you think so?"

"Well — I don't know."

"Yes, he has," asserted all of my family, "and so have you. Everybody around here acts funny lately, 'cepting Tony and he thinks he's too smart."

"Such a way to talk!" I remonstrated.

"Told me to come in or stay out, one or the other, this morning, so I just naturally stayed out."

"But, old sport, you're fond of Tony —"

"Ye'a," he agreed, wrinkling his nose with worry, "but it is funny about Tony. I never seem to like him nice and smooth like I do Mr. Macelwayne. When I do like Tony I like him a lot, better'n anybody most, but if I don't like him that way, then I don't like him any. It is awful mixing, isn't it, Phyl?"

"I should think it might be," I said, and then, though I was ashamed of each word as I spoke it; "I did not know that you ever liked Tony better than anyone else, dear?"

"When I do like him, I mean," he answered, adding in explanation but with a little half note of apology that hurt almost unbelievably, "You see, old scout — he's a fellow."

"He's a fellow!" After all of my family had gone those words hung heavy in the room as fog clings in a hollow, so I went outside under the trees to try to forget them. Whereupon the moon emerged from the soft comfort of a cloud, and remarked that he was a fellow.

Oh, that aeons-old call, stronger than the mate call, of man to man! No good for a woman to try to answer it with her futile feminine voice. Eve, I think, was the first woman to hear it and that was why, after the gates of the garden were closed, she gave men children to Adam. No woman understands it; the wise woman accepts it; the foolish woman fights it; all women fear it.

"But," I whined, out there alone, "I have tried so hard."

"'Tried so hard. Tried so hard,'" twitted the stars, eavesdroppers all. "And what has your trying come to?"

I was not in the humor for riddles. I was not in

the humor for that old moon, conceited moon, just because some angel, in a moment of malice, had happened to paint the caricature of a man on its flat face. I was not, to tell the truth, in the humor for much of anything. But I went into perch-edifice and lit the lamp and took the "Sonnets from the Portuguese" down from the shelf and began to read them. Soon I discovered that I was not in the humor for them or, more accurately, that they were not in the least in the humor for me.

I was glad to hear Pat come stamping up on the porch. I thought that I did feel in the humor for him, but as soon as he came into the room I could read in his face that something was wrong.

"It's Mr. Miser," he said, in answer to my question, "he's sick, only a lot sicker than usual, Phyl. He's coughing like he was hollow and swearing — Oh, just awful! I wanted to put a cold pack around his neck, but he wouldn't let me, but I think maybe he'll let you. And some rock and rye, maybe, or flaxseed, or something. It seems to hurt him awful. I'm going back now and you come soon as you can get the things ready, will you, Phyl, 'cause I — I'm kind'a scared about him."

It seemed to me that Pat might have waited a minute to walk with me, I was only a minute getting ready, but he did not wait and later I was not sorry because, down by wee river I came upon Mr. Macelwayne.

"Came upon" is quite the proper expression; stumbled over would be nearly correct. He was sitting so quietly that I did not see him until I was right beside him, and he startled me some, and I gave a silly little squeal.

"Phyllis," he said, getting to his feet, "I didn't hear you coming!"

It was the second time he had ever called me by my name, and that, and finding him there, surprised speech right out of me, so I stood still and looked at him and saw that he looked much too tired, and much too old, and much too sorry about something. Because he never looks that way about anyone nor anything but Tony:

"Is — is Tony all right, or — all wrong?" I managed.

"No," he answered, "'not that way' as you would say," — he is always quoting me, — "not — that." He finished his sentence with a smile. I wish he had not smiled, just so. I wish he had not. When poets and orators and folks like that try to move us by talking about strong men's tears, I wonder why, instead, if they want really to make us sorry, they don't talk about brave men's smiles?

"I am sorry," I said, "truly sorry, about — everything."

"Please," he answered, "please don't you be sorry about — anything."

"Then you don't — blame me?" I questioned.

"Blame you!" he echoed. "Blame — *you!* Why, dear," — and I waited for the rest of it, the "child," but he forgot it, — "you have been greatly generous. We are to be blamed, not you, if we have — hoped and — been mistaken — disappointed."

"Only —" I said, "I — didn't know."

"Didn't know?" he prompted.

"That you wanted — it so much." I meant, of course, that I had not known that he had wanted, so much, to have me marry Tony; but I did not like to say it, just that way, and I did not need to, either, for I am sure that he understood.

"I want just one thing so much," he answered, and he reached out and took my hand in his, as he had that other moonlight night, "I want you to be happy." Then he dropped my hands, quite as if he were surprised to find them held in his hands, and added; "— and Tony to be happy, and Pat — of course."

Perhaps because his sentence had been so disjointed it took me rather longer than usual to find an answer that would fit it. At any rate, before I had found an answer, he had begun to speak again in an entirely different manner, in a new tone of voice.

He called me dear, again, but he remembered the child this time and added it with an emphasis, and went on speaking quite practically about Pat. He agreed with me and approved of the stand I had taken

about keeping Pat with me for the present. Later, perhaps, when it was time for Pat to be sent away to school — But, after all, that was later so we need not trouble about it now. Then he began to speak, quite unpractically about Tony. He insisted that I was entirely mistaken in Tony's motive, — told me a great deal about Tony's feelings which I am quite sure Tony himself did not know, and in which I was singularly uninterested. So I told him about Mr. Miser and his very bad cough and said I must hurry on.

"Shall we see you to-morrow?" I questioned, because it seemed to me I could not stand another day that matched this day.

"We are leaving to-morrow, you know," (I had not known), he answered, "but of course we'll come up and tell you and all of your family good-by."

That is all, except — to-morrow they are coming to tell us good-by.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

"She were," so Mr. Miser welcomed me this morning when I went to his house to prepare his breakfast for him, "she were to all intents and purposes, round. Shaped most uncommon bulbous, she were, most so of any woman I have ever saw, barrin' one at the circus, the which the man claimed 'ut when they transported her from place to place they had to use a baggage car. Now I ain't claimin' that this here Mrs. S. V. Twentz, third cousin to the radiator, come up to that for size, but Lor', Lor', she come near it! Somethin' as light on her feet, she were, as a steam roller, an' when she come visitin' on a scow the owner had to be most particular requestin' her to remain stationary in the middle. Standin' joke it were, in scow town when the river ris' that Mrs. S. V. must'a been visitin' and fell in.

"But S. V. had his pride in her, notwithstandin'. He weren't proud of her figger, an' there was that about her face 'ut wouldn't put pride in no man, but his pride come out when she met up with strangers. No sooner 'ud he git through with the formal wordin': 'Shake hands with Mrs. S. V.,' than he'd stand back and regard her prideful.

" ' My Christian name,' she'd speak up, ' give me by my mother, is Fleurette. The which name my poor mother took out'a a French novel.'

" Her and S. V. had it planned out to put jist the name, ' Fleurette,' on her tombstone, but it bothered 'em some as to givin' credit to the author, but to my last hearin' they 'ud decided again it, as like to be misleadin'. And speakin' of tombstones gits me back to what I started to tell you this mornin', little gal, and that is that I'll soon be ready for mine, now, and I don't want none. And that brings me to what I was goin' to say, which were that I wanted to have you write a letter to a lawyer from me askin' him what he claims is the correct price of will makin'. I ain't claimin' to have much to leave, but I'm claimin' to have a bit and that bit I want'a go to a society for prevention."

" Prevention of what? " I suggested.

" Jist general prevention."

" But," I insisted, " you'll have to specify some particular things you want prevented, Mr. Totenberry, such as cruelty to animals, or —"

" I think," he interrupted, " that I'll have 'em start preventin' city dudes from roamin' loose and work on down from that."

Along with the letter to the lawyer I sent another letter to the young doctor, asking him to come to see Mr. Miser. I am worried about Mr. Miser; he is so

much more ill than he has ever been before. I stayed with him all day to-day. It seemed necessary, although beyond tidying his old musty house for him, and listening to his poor old musty memories, there was very little that I could do.

When evening came he had talked himself tired, so he asked me to sing to him. I sing very poorly, but I love to sing, so I sat down beside his bed and sang hymns, and love songs, and ragtime songs,—all the songs I could think of.

"You couldn't, now," he said, when the room had grown quite dark, "you couldn't sing one of these here rock-a-by baby to sleep songs, could you?"

I thought that I could, and I sang my favorite lullaby, the one I used to sing most often to Pat, about the baby sailing out across the sea, only not forgetting to sail home again, to me. When I had finished:

"I never," he said to my intense astonishment, "I never felt so uncommon near to murder as I do at this here particular minute."

"Murder," I gasped, "not murder, you don't mean, Mr. Totenberry?"

"I've said it. Murder. You didn't give way none on the religious songs, and you didn't give way none on them love songs, but Lor', Lor', on that there rock-a-by song you give clar away, little gal! And I ain't claimin' it's my put in. All I have to say I says when I claims that dudes comin' around and stealin' the roses

out'n a little gal's cheeks, and the sparkle out'n her eyes, murder is too good for 'em. Notwithstandin' that he ain't fit to lick a certain little gal's shoes, murder I says is too good for 'em."

"But," I remonstrated, "you are so mistaken —"

"Now I ain't claimin' nothin' about mistakes," he answered, the ridiculous, obstinate old fellow, "all I claims is —"

Just then nearly neighbor came stalking in. It was the first time for a very long time that I have been glad to see nearly neighbor.

"Murder, I claims," began Mr. Miser, as I had so hoped he would not begin. But, fortunately, nearly neighbor took no notice of this sanguinary opening. He had brought with him a tremendous piece of news which must be told at once: he had, at last, sold his farm and for his own price.

I tried, desperately, to be glad about the part of it I should be glad about, that he had sold his place for a fair price; and to be sorry about the part I should be sorry about, that he was leaving our mountain, for forever, in less than a week. I am afraid I did not succeed very well. I am afraid I was glad about it all.

The owner, nearly neighbor said, was not coming to live on the place but was going to send some caretakers. Care-takers sounded wholesome and pleasant and interesting, and no matter if they were not, no matter if they were all those things with "un's" be-

fore them, they could not be — how shall I say it? — quite so difficult as nearly neighbor has been since our misunderstanding.

Even during those first days in May and June when I was happiest, I could never meet nearly neighbor without a bit of the happiness oozing away. I have not mentioned our occasional meetings because they could not be happy things to mention. His manner has been, always, sullen, reproachful, disagreeable, disapproving. With a foolishness that has amounted nearly to fear, sometimes, I have dreaded this coming winter.

"You don't believe," Mr. Macelwayne once asked when I had told him some of my silly thoughts, "that the man would actually harm you, or Pat?"

"No," I answered, "I am sure that he would not. But all winter he will be up there in the snow and rain, and he will hope: hope that at last his prediction about the big trees may come true; hope for the landslide; and — it seems to me it is about as bad to have folks hoping that way as it would be to have them harming."

Of course I did not tell Mr. Macelwayne that nearly neighbor had not begun to wear the real hate in his eyes before the men came to the mountain. I am much afraid that nearly neighbor is first cousin to the dog in the manger. And yet, after all, who am I to be calling names? If I remember rightly I starred in that rôle myself for a time, this summer.

I stayed with Mr. Miser until he was sound asleep for the night and then all of my family and I walked home together. The air was thick with September mist, curtaining the star shine and the moonlight away from the world, and the trees were as solemn and somber as funeral folks, and even wee river seemed quite unable to carry a tune.

"I'm afraid," said all of my family, "that maybe it'll seem kind'a lonesome now, for a while."

"Maybe," I agreed.

You see, this morning, very early, Mr. Macelwayne and Tony came down to perch-edifice and told all of my family and me good-by.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

It has been several weeks since I have written in the ledger and then I wrote of a good-by, and now I have another goodby to tell. Mr. Miser's.

It scarcely seems consistent for me to care as much as I do care, but during the last weeks when I was with him constantly, night and day, I grew very fond of him. He was hard to take care of, after the first few days, and because he was in pain he was cross, and fearfully exacting. It was good to have the dozens of duties; good to have him exacting.

"You are tired out," the young doctor said to me, one night, "you must let me get help for you. You must rest."

What I said to the young doctor was: no, no, that I was not tired, that I did not want help and that I could not think of resting. What I thought to myself was: "I am tired, too tired to think of anything but medicines and temperatures, too tired to do anything but keep up the fight against death. And if only," I went on to think, "if only I could always be just so tired; if only I could have, always, the many necessary duties that I dare not miss nor forget; if only I need never rest."

But the resting time has come now. Just how does one go about it,— resting,— I wonder?

If Time were more ungenerous. He isn't. "Here," he says, "are days for you: all the days of this year to be done; three hundred and sixty-five days in the next year; and then, there is the next year, and the next, and the next."

It does no good to whine: "Please, please! I don't exactly care for such a lot of days, for mine. You are giving me too many. They — smother so. Whatever shall I do with them?"

"Oh, spend them," Time answers, casually.

"For what?"

Time does not answer.

"Old sport," said all of my family, just then, "you look awfully — well, not disagreeable but — queer. Supposing you and me cheer up."

We shook hands on the supposition, and since then I have been thinking. Those days, that Time has given me to spend, I'll try not to waste them. I'll try not to be extravagant with them. I'll try to spend them wisely. But whether I succeed in doing that, or whether I do not succeed, there is one thing I will not do with them: I will not use them to pay that greedy old fiddler who fiddled for my dancing. I have over-paid him, lavishly, as it is.

"But you said," interrupted all of my family, again,

"you said, and shook hands on it, that we'd be cheerful, Phyl."

"I'm working up to it, winding up to it," I assured him; "it takes a few minutes, you know, to get a start."

"Anyway," he encouraged, "Mr. Miser's funeral was a very happy funeral, Phyl."

"Did it seem so to you, dear?" I asked, repressing a shiver and a remembrance of the little country graveyard, and the rain, and the crooked discolored headstones, and the soggy wet ground.

"'Cause there were such a few folks to be sorry," he explained, "only just you and me and the doctor. I guess we don't need to count the minister and the undertaker. That was lots happier than if hundreds of folks had been there, all being sorry — or wasn't it?"

"Something like that," I assured him.

Because all of my family and I were not making a success of being cheerful I stopped writing, then, and he and I went out for a walk together.

It was a half-hearted, unenthusiastic day. The trees dripped water from the morning's rain, and dripped their leaves, too, slowly, as if it mattered little to them whether they came off or whether they stayed on. All the growing things seemed to be trying to tell us that summer was over and that winter was nearly here.

The sun made a pretense of shining, but the lazy clouds would not watch where they were going, and kept getting in the way, and it would not bother to try to shine through them.

All of my family and I were rather like the day, unenthusiastic. When we came to a place where the dry leaves were thick and rustled and swished under one's feet, all of my family stopped, politely, and suggested that I might like to play grand lady dressed up in silk skirts,— a game he has ever had small sympathy with, — and, should I like to, he would be the gaping crowd and admire. But, someway, to-day the dead leaves did not remind me of the rustle of silk, and my chin felt as if it did not care at all to stay propped up in a grand lady attitude, so I thanked him just the same but said I thought I did not care to play that, not to-day.

When we came to nearly neighbor's cornfields I stopped and said that if he'd like to be colonel of that vast army,— a game I have ever disapproved of,— I'd be the general in the tent. But he said he did not feel colonelish to-day, and besides the soldiers looked droopy and tattered, so unless I'd play too, and be captain, he guessed he would not play, to-day. Only — if I did care to be captain, like last time, it might be some fun. Should we try?

I begged off. All of my family sighed, and said it did seem that I was getting lots grown-upter, or some-

thing. I couldn't deny it. We walked on, in silence, until:

"The maple leaves are awful bright and pretty," he suggested.

I agreed with him that they were.

"And the dogwood leaves are redder 'en blood, and I wonder why the dogwood flowers are the only ones that try to bloom in the fall, Phyl?"

"Perhaps they are poor little dull-brained things," I said, "that forget their seasons."

"Maybe," pondered all of my family, "only I like best to think of it this other way. Like maybe they thought the fall needed some flowers, and so they'd come out and try, even if they couldn't make much of an out at it. Brave. Like that, you know."

"Maybe," I agreed, and added,—shame on me!—"Only it is silly to try to bloom out of season. To me they don't seem brave. They seem puny and—mistaken."

Again all of my family sighed: "You used to make up such good stories about everything, old sport. But—now you don't. And you used to make bigger discoveries than I could. But now—you just only look at your shoes."

Just only look at my shoes! Could any performance be more foolish, more futile than that? Especially when one's shoes are most unattractive shoes, half soled and with patches on the side.

"The reason I was looking at my shoes," I fibbed, and I had to think quickly because I did not want all of my family to know what a foolish old foot-looker I was, "the reason I look at my shoes is because I know what is inside of 'em. Let's look at your shoes. Yes, sure enough, the same things, almost, are inside your shoes."

"Feet," said all of my family, prosaically.

"Feet!" I mocked. "I knew you didn't know. Wings! Fairy wings, that are going to fly us to an enchanted island where old Red Roister lives, grumbling, growling about, because he wants to eat the princess, and where there is a brave bold knight, named Patrick the Dauntless —"

"Fine!" joyed all of my family. "Fine! Oh, Phyl, old scout, I thought you'd forgotten all about Red Roister!"

So, for the remainder of the afternoon, perch-edifice was an enchanted island, and for dinner we had peacock's brains and flamingo's tongues, and the lumps of sugar we dropped in our tea were great pearls, dissolving in wine, and we were very gay and very silly, and all of my family uttered not one more complaint concerning me and my used-to-be disposition.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

If Pat had been a little yellow dog he would not have gone away with Tony, when he whistled. If Pat had been a little yellow dog he would have come home before this. But Pat is not a little yellow dog, and, of course, I am very glad of that, and if he has no doggish instincts at all, then that may be partly my fault because I have never tried to teach them to him. Someway, though, I didn't know, didn't think — But, after all, I must not forget that Pat is only nine years old.

A week ago to-night Tony came back to our mountain, apparently for no particular reason, but when I heard the knock on the door and answered it and saw Tony standing there I nearly said: "You have come for Pat?"

I did not say that. I did not ask him why he had come. I just asked him to come in, as if he were still camping down in the clump of vine maples, and I set myself to try to be matter of fact and merely friendly.

But his visit was an anti-climax, and we each knew it and felt it, and anti-climaxes are ever awkward things to manage. I told him the mountain news and he seemed bored. He told me the city news. It was hard to be interested. He seemed to be so anxious to

avoid personalities that he was afraid, even, to mention persons, but I would not have it so.

"How is Kitty?" I asked.

"As pretty as ever — prettier," he answered.

"And Mr. Macelwayne?"

"Unk's business has taken him to California for a few weeks."

"And — you?"

"I am very lonely," he answered.

To ask the other question, the big important question about him seemed too saucy, so I did not ask it, but I tried to put question marks in my eyes. He must have seen them there because he answered:

"No — not yet." The trouble was he emphasized the "yet."

I am fond of Tony, I do love him, but never did I love him less than I loved him that late afternoon as I sat there and looked out of the window and watched the trees net the sunset in their branches and listened to him netting me into his life. He had no right. That was how it seemed to me. And, when he had finished implying, not bravely asserting even that, but subtly implying that, if his life were to spell success, mine was the credit, and if his life were to spell failure, mine was the blame, I found it hard to reply. I had to take refuge, as I had done once before with Tony, in forgiving.

It was not hard to forgive his bland uninterestedness

in my life, so long as his came true ; most men, I think, are like that. It was not hard to forgive the weakness, tinged with cowardice, that shifted the responsibility on me ; all sages and sagas to the contrary women love men quite as much for their weaknesses as for their strengths, I know. The hard part to forgive was the cheat of it. If my great-greats had made me a bit different, Tony would have come offering me money, and that would have had the immense merit of honesty about it. But my great-greats had not made me a bit different so Tony came offering me — what he had no right to offer, not that way.

If only my common sense would have allowed me to doubt the cheat of it, for a while, but it would not ; not for a minute. Rather relentless my common sense seems to me, at times, though usually when I start railing at it, it comes to the rescue in some way. So it did that late afternoon :

" Tony," I said suddenly, and I was nearly as surprised to hear my own words as Tony could have been to hear them, " should you like to borrow Pat, for a little while? "

So that was how it happened. Just after the world had turned around into gray, and just before the stars came out to freckle the sky, Tony and Pat rode away together down the road in the big automobile, and the last thing I heard was Pat giggling.

If it meant just a happy time for Pat, if it meant

anything at all but what it does mean I could be all glad. What it does mean is the beginning of the end.

Too, I didn't know that Pat could be — well, quite so glad to go. I did not think that his one eager question would be: "How long can I stay, old sport?" I didn't — But no matter what I did not. No matter at all. Pat is only nine years old, and Tony is a fellow.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

I have been visiting to-night among my books. First I stopped at the little white house where Emily Dickinson lives. I stopped there first because Mr. Macelwayne, when he gave it to me, said that he had found much of me in there, and I thought it would be a good thing, this evening, for me to find much of myself, somewhere, anywhere, if I could. But I did not find any mirrors in Emily's house, and I did not find Emily herself in a very cheerful humor. She told me about souls, and she said that they asked, first, for pleasure; and next for excuse from pain; and then for anodyns; and then to sleep; and then, still unsatisfied, those asking souls begged for the liberty to die. And I did not care to argue, in fact there seemed to be no room for argument, so I simply said, "Indeed," and hurried on to the bright red house,—most suitable of colors,—of Mr. Chesterton's poems.

I found him in a morbid mood,—talking about hanging himself, he was. And, though he assured me that the hanging planned for that day had been deferred, I was bound to feel that some other time, when the neighbors were not on the fence to enjoy it, he'd sneak out quietly and privately and tie the noose and

go through with the entire affair. When I changed the subject, he assured me that it was something to be sure of a desire. I agreed with him, that it was something, but as he did not define his something at all definitely, and as I left my something entirely undefined, I think we parted with a difference of opinion.

Next, I stopped to see Mrs. Florence Wilkinson Evans, and she said to me:

"Nay, do not hoard your dream, poor child,
That came to bless
The beautiful impossible
The once-was happiness.

"Nay, do not sit for hours in the dark,
Crying for that brief glory,
Even if you wore it once upon your breast,
Let the dream go, poor child, and take your rest.

* * * * * * *

"So let it go, and smile, poor child,
Smile though your tears;
Build humbler hopes for how else shall you live
All the long years?"

And I have been sitting here now for more than an hour in the dark, alone. I think she put me in the notion of doing it and — some of the other things she so wisely warns one not to do, I have been doing. Tomorrow I think I shall try to begin to build the humbler hopes though I am afraid I may make a botch job of it.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Mr. Miser's lawyer came to see me to-day. He had written and asked me to come to see him, and I had written in answer that I could not, so that is why he came to see me.

When I heard his step on the porch I thought it was Pat's step and my heart jumped up, and then when I heard the knock on the door I thought it might be some other person's knock and my heart kept right on jumping. I am afraid I did not seem very glad to see that lawyer person when I opened the door. I am afraid from the very start of his visit to the very end of his visit I disappointed that lawyer person.

He thought he had such great good news for me. I suppose he did have, if fifteen thousand dollars out at high interest (Mr. Miser was not an old fashioned miser, you see, he was a most modern miser), is great good news. Mr. Miser has left it all to me.

So now I could buy myself crepe-de-chine dresses and fancy shoes in vast quantities, if only I happened to want them. So now I could go traveling, if only there were some place in the world I loved as I do my mountain, right here. If Pat were home what a splendid spree we should have. But Pat is not at home.

As I sit and think I am fairly dazzled by the quantities and qualities of things I could buy with so much money, if only I happened to want any of the things. A far more bewildering thought, I find, is the number of things one can not buy with fifteen, nor with fifty thousand dollars.

And that, of course, is a selfish, sentimental, moonish, mawkish way to talk. At least so much money will give me an excellent foundation to start building my humbler hopes upon — to-morrow. If one knew how to go about it — building humbler hopes. To-morrow I'm sure, though, I'll think differently; be happier, wiser, saner. To-morrow.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

A long time ago I wrote about love, wrote at length about it, and that of course was because I did not know about love; not any. When a woman really knows about love it takes just one word to say it all. Need. It isn't that I want you so, oh, my dear, I — need you so!

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

I wish that Mr. Miser had lost all of that money of his down a crack. I wouldn't pry up the boards. It bothers. It argues. It fusses.

Instead of sitting down placidly as a foundation for those humbler hopes it caroms about and urges me to use it for hopes that are far from humble, for hopes I have no right to have at all.

"Go to the city," it teases, "and buy your pretty dresses, and —"

"But," I always interrupt, "I think no one wants me in the city. One can't go places where one is not wanted, not politely."

It tries to deceive: "Don't," it murmurs, "go — that way. Don't bother with hopes and their relatives — leave all of that at home in perch-edifice. Go for a change; for theatres and sightseeing; go to get fancies and fur-trimmed things; go for joy."

"Only," I am forced to answer, "I never did go to the city for joy. I never did find it there. My chiefest joy in the city has ever been the leaving it. If I were to go there now, no matter how I'd fib or how you'd fib about it, the truth would be that I'd be going

for — just one thing. And, G. B. S. to the contrary, I care too much for that one thing to go after it."

"Feminist!" The money often mocks at me, about here, in this unceasing argument of ours.

It thinks that I am inconsistent. I am not. There is much difference in believing in the right to do a thing, and in believing in the want to do a thing. I think any woman has a right to hoot of her love from the house-tops, or shriek it from the cellars, to her beloved and to all the big world full of folks; but I think that few women who love have the want to. I believe that I have fully as much right to put on a pretty frock and take my heart in my hand and go to my dear and say: "Here is my heart for you. Will you take it?" as I have to put on a plain frock and buy a license for peddling, and a tray of shoestrings, and go to selling them in the street. I have the inclination to do neither. Nor have I the inclination to win, as a fancy frocked lady, what I could not win as a funny little frump. That I think would not be right; not be fair.

Sometimes the money agrees with me. Sometimes it does not agree with me. Usually I have to be most stern with it. And it whines. Perhaps because for so long it has been doing nothing but accumulating interest, it is inordinately desirous of being used:

"What are you going to *do* with me?" is its constant wail.

"I am going to use you for Pat's education, at least

I hope I may be allowed to use you for that," I reply, "and, in the meantime I am going to use you to make life more comfortable."

"Comfortable," it jeers, "a coward's word!"

Such a pesky old prodder as it is, just when I want least to be prodded. For the sake of peace I shall have to make some plans about it before long. Tomorrow, or the next day, I'll try to. But it is a nuisance to have to be a person with money about which to plan, with money to spend, when, most of all, one wants to be a woolly brown bear that can crawl into a tree's big trunk, or some such place, and obliterate itself for the whole long winter through. Everything will seem different when spring comes, I know that. Everything always does seem different when spring comes.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

It is wrong and foolish to make up your mind, ahead of time, that you are not going to like people whom you have never met. That is an axiom of mine that I am ever disregarding, and each time I do disregard it I am ashamed and sorry afterwards.

This time it was about November. I had made up my mind that I was not going to care for November, much, not this year; and when she came this morning, frosted all over like a fancy cake and accompanied by an east wind, I made up my mind all over again, no, I was not going to care for her. You see, I had thought that she had only pumpkins and apples and celery and things of that sort in her basket. I never guessed that she had brought along with her Papa and Mamma Putt. But she did bring them with her, this very day, and now I apologize to November because of my before thoughts, and now I tell her that I am going to be particularly fond of her.

On my walk this afternoon I was astonished to see smoke streaming out of the chimney of nearly neighbor's house. Up I ran, as fast as I could, and knocked on the door. I did not care if the people were cross-patch people, it would be good, very good to hear a

human voice again. I was just making up my speech to myself, like Rudolph in "Boheme," who I was and where I lived, and the rest of it, when the door popped open and the dearest little, oddest little bright-eyed, round-faced apple of a lady popped out, and took my hands and pulled me inside and popped the door shut again.

My speech never got itself said at all, there was no need for it, no room for it, because:

"Deary me! Now isn't this nice! You are the little girl who lives down in the trees. Papa? Papa? Come right here. The little girl who lives down in the trees has come to see us. And we were coming to see you this very afternoon. But this is much better. We *are* so glad to see you. Oh, deary me, will you look at those wet shoes of yours! Sit right down here, child, and take them off and put your feet on this stick of wood in the oven. Pa-pa? Never you mind fussing with a collar. Come and stir the fire so's the kettle will boil for tea. And I know you'll excuse me, dearie, while I lift the rest of these doughnuts out of the pot."

Before I had time to catch my breath it had all been accomplished. We were in the good-smelling warm little kitchen,—a kitchen that looked as if it had been washed, and boiled, and hung in the sun to air, and ironed, since nearly neighbor had lived in it,—and I had my shoes off and my feet in the oven; and Papa Putt (his cunning little wife right over again only in

a masculine edition), was piling more wood into a fire which needed it not at all; and, if only there had been some cold fowls and some mugs of porter about, I'd have been quite positive that I had died and gone to one of Dickens' novels in place of Heaven, and I would have been, I am sure, quite satisfied with the substitute.

My ten toes got tingly warm, and something in my heart got warm, and I sat there and drank the fragrant tea that Mamma Putt kept pouring into my cup from a fat little brownie of a teapot, swaddled when not in use in a blue and white pillow of a cozy, and I ate the crispy hot doughnuts, and I purred. I am positive that I purred. I despise cats, but I am about them as most folks are about the very rich: I despise 'em, but I often think I'd like to be 'em.

I wish I believed that God liked to be thanked. I can not believe that way because the meanest mortal does not like a verbal pouring-out of gratitude; but I wish that I did, to-night, because to-night I feel wordy and thankful. Most I'd like to thank Him for putting the Putts in the world. Always after this, I know, when the world seems hurtful, or rather badly managed, I'll think: "But — after all, there are the Putts." And yet I am not willing to regard them as compensations, they are not like that. Despite Emerson, I consider the word compensation a poor miserly word, at best. Disinfectant. There is a word I like, and I could tell the story, so:

"After the flood was over and the waters had receded, God found that, despite the cleansing process, quite a mess was left, and He decided that the experiment had not been wholly a success, and thought that He would not try it again. 'Another time,' He thought, 'when folks grow foolish and the earth gets all unsanitary with badness, I'll make some people like the Putts.'"

"Then," all of my family would question, if he were here to question, "why doesn't He make lots more people like that, Phyl?"

The reason I am sure all of my family would ask that question is because it is a poser, and all of my family makes sort of a specialty of posers.

The only answer of which I can think needs "perhaps" for a preface, and perhaps prefaced answers are not, I know, convincing; but:

"Perhaps God just made the original pattern and then expected the people on earth to do the rest. That seems fair, giving us a chance to earn credits as creators for our own selves." But because my theological ventures are apt to end in tangles and tag-rags of other folks' philosophies, I think I'll just say that, to thank God for putting the Putts in the world, I am going to try to act more grateful to the world at large.

I began to-night by sending a furiously large check to a charitable organization. I don't approve of charities of that sort,—not at all,—but I love them. I

have not had so much fun for a long time as I had when I was writing that check. I am going to indulge very often. I am, in fact, planning a veritable orgy of indiscriminate charities.

I am glad that Mr. Miser did not lose his money down a crack. It does not seem nearly such a large amount as it did, and it has stopped prodding and whining and has begun to develop possibilities.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

To-day I met a brand new lady, and she slapped me hard on each cheek, and called me names, and shook me until my teeth did a chin-chopper-chin, and stood back and pointed a forefinger at me and poked shame off it with the other forefinger, and spurned me, and left me breathless and shaken.

Her name is Fannie Stearns Davis, and she came with a bundle of new books my money had bought for me, and she looked entirely gentle and ladylike and placid; not any one could have suspected her of pugilistic tendencies, so I began to make my acquaintance with her casually, with slight curiosity, with but a superficial interest. Then it happened. This:

“You have no right to spoil the sun,
Blacken the blue and blur the stars.
Is your fool's face the only one
That ever pressed Life's prison bars
And found escape too bitter hard,
And cursed the great cold gaoler God;
Then, crooked-lipped, pain-smirched and marred,
Shrieked to the peaceful folk who trod
The free street still;—‘But look at me,
‘I am so hurt, God hates me so,
‘I know that all Eternity
‘Is foul and false and bleared I know.’
How do you know? What right have you

To show your shameful coward's face?
 Have you alone run ruined through
 Hell's wide waste hillocked torture place?
 Have you a blood-sealed pact with Pain?
 A secret tryst with Agony?
 Has no one else dared death to gain
 The great brave soul, that wrests the key
 Of freedom from God's Hand?"

* * * * *

"You! What know you of God and Life?
 There festering to your prison bars?
 Be proud! When you have won that strife
 You will not dare to curse the stars."

You stranger woman, wherever you live in this big world, I hold out my hands to you and thank you. Had you spoken only those two words to me, "Be proud!" my debt to you should need be measured by the mountains that peak up into the lower layers of Heaven. I was wrapped in a garment of my own making; emulating as nearly as I could my then ideal, the beast the bear; suffocating in my own silliness. Ruthlessly you have snatched the garment away and left me, after the first shivering shock of surprise, pulse thumpingly thankful for the liberation.

I am glad you did not say, right there: "Be brave!" All of my poet friends, right through the lists, Browning logically, Matthew Arnold pathetically, Shelley passionately, Whitman thunderously, all of them, and all of the others have admonished, in different manners and meters, bravery. But bravery seems to me to be

merely an antithesis; pride a positive personal creation.

"It hurts me," says the exponent of bravery when she burns her finger, "it hurts badly,— see the blister? — but I will not cry about it. No, I will be brave. Perhaps just a bit of ointment for it" (humbler hopes), "but no tears. Soon it will be quite well — all but the scar."

"Hurt?" says the exponent of pride when she burns her finger. "Hurt?" Not any. My fingers are of a peculiar superior make that may touch any number of hot things and never know it at all. A blister, you say? Why, so there is. But then I am particularly partial to blisters, they look so much like pearls."

"Wisdom?" all of my family would ask, if he were here, and I should be forced to answer: "No, dear, only telling. Only, perhaps, quibbling."

But that makes no difference. I would not quarrel one little quarrel with anyone about words. So all the futile arguments in the world have begun, I think, so they all continue, because there are many minds and few words. Pride is the key that fits my door. Is bravery the key that fits yours? Well, then.

Pride I know does not rhyme with apology. Not much do I approve of apologies, either, but: — That weakling cry of need! That whining like a consumptive Camille for spring! That sniveling about anodynes and death! That howling about humbler

hopes! That making of my love a teredo, first submerging all of myself in the lukewarm waters of self pity, and then allowing it to gnaw away and destroy the very timbers of my being!

What was it I promised all of me that I would make of my love? Something that began with "t" but not a teredo, not a trial, not a tragedy. A triumph. That was it. And so it is. So it shall be, for always.

CHAPTER FORTY

Yesterday Pat came home. Mr. Macelwayne brought him. I was sitting by the window and I saw them coming up the path. It was good to see them, so good that, as I ran to meet them I quite forgot that there was anything in the big world that was wrong, so good that Mr. Macelwayne's first words, a peculiar mixture of anger and apology seemed entirely out of tune:

"This," he said, "has been an abominable outrage. Tony had no right. I never guessed that Pat was with Tony until I got home from San Francisco yesterday and found him there. Here he is. Here is my word that such a thing shall never happen again."

I tried to assure him that I had not considered it an outrage. I tried to explain to him that I had offered to lend Pat to Tony. I tried to say that really it had been good of Tony to be so kind to Pat, and that Pat had enjoyed himself, and —"

"And," interrupted Mr. Macelwayne, "the trouble is you have 'talking eyes.' That's your Browning, isn't it? But you have no reason for fear. Pat,

from now on, is not to be borrowed. He is all yours, as you would say, to keep. I'll explain later."

By "later" he meant, of course when he and I were alone. I was glad to hear him say it because I knew then that Tony had kept to our agreement,—have I forgotten to mention it?—not to tell Pat anything about the secret for a few years.

The later came very soon because all of my family, little turncoat, was mad with excitement and joy at getting home and in just a few minutes he was on with his slicker and out in the rain to explore.

"I'll begin," said Mr. Macelwayne, the instant the door had closed behind Pat, "with a confession."

"Need you?" I asked, "because confessions are ever such uncomfortable things."

"I think I do need," he smiled, "though you are quite right, confessions are not comfortable. This one simply puts me in my customary rôle, the one I have played consistently since I met you—that of a fool."

I tried to insert some objections, but he went right on, speaking so rapidly that there was no room for them, smothering them entirely.

"Pat is not Tony's son. There is no shadow of a doubt about it—"

"Oh," I gasped, and then: "But—that isn't a confession."

"I have known it almost from the first," he answered.

I could only sit and stare at him. My thoughts were too topsy-turvy for articulation.

"Chiefly," he said, as if he were answering some question of mine, "chiefly because I am a blundering fool, and an old one, and you know the rest of that."

"No," I managed, "not that way."

"When we first got the woman's confession," Mr. Macelwayne went on, "Tony jumped, instantly, to the conclusion that the child was Pat, and I jumped with him, propelled by my hopes, I suppose. Pat is such a charming little man. Tony had never displayed an atom of interest in any other child. He was fond of Pat, and Pat seemed fond of him and then — there were other reasons. But I was not content, as Tony was, to accept the vague resemblance in appearance as proof absolute. I should have liked to be content with that, but I couldn't —"

"Only," I said, "it is odd. There is a certain sameness of expression when their faces are in repose, and then their smile —"

"That does not seem particularly odd to me. Study any face you see, anywhere, and you can find in it a marked resemblance to some other face. Physiognomists tell us that there are a limited number of facial types — But, I am wandering away. As I was saying, much as I hoped we might be right about

Pat I felt it was my duty to investigate. I engaged some detectives — that sort of thing. No need to go into the means, now. To me, a tyro in mysteries, the end was accomplished in a remarkably short time."

"But how," I questioned, "can you be sure?"

"The woman who found Tony's son had adopted him, legally. The detectives got at it that way, through the records. The nurse had evidently had a quantity of money left and had made no effort to find the baby. The woman, Mrs. Kendall is her name — not that it makes any difference — had the ring and the locket with Tony's and Sylvia's picture in it. The date was the same that the nurse had given us. No, there is no doubt."

"And he, the little boy?"

"He died two years ago. He was never strong, Mrs. Kendall says."

At first I could not say anything, I was just sorry, sickeningly sorry, that was all. Then I began to understand. "So," I said, "after you had found that out, and when Tony was so happy about Pat, you couldn't bear to spoil his happiness. I understand —"

"No," he interrupted, "I think that was not the reason."

"Not the reason?" I echoed.

"I began all this," he said, "with the remark that I was a fool. My one shadow of defense is that I knew Tony was also a fool and bat blind. You see

I found out the truth while that idiotic girl was here —"

"Idiotic girl?"

"Kitty."

"But," I said, and was sorry the minute I had spoken because it does seem so mean to blame when things are all past, "but that wasn't fair, not to Kitty, nor to Tony, nor —" I had started to say, "nor to me," but I stopped just in time.

"Was she fair," he spoke almost passionately, "ever? That cold tea episode —"

"Queer," he went on more quietly, after he had looked out at the rain wet world for a while, "queer how fools will fight to the end to justify their actions. There is no justification for attempting to juggle other people's lives, as fakers do their colored balls, and yet —"

"When you think you can make other folks happy that way?" I suggested.

"If one could be positive —" he began, and paused. "But one can't be positive," he finished with a sigh that he hurried to try to conceal with a smile and added, "as you would say, 'not ever.' And now, won't you make it easier for me by asking some of those questions that are waiting to be asked?"

Questions, somehow, did not seem quite kind, not then. After all he had told me as much as it was necessary for me to know. So I tried to squash the

questions that were pounding in my mind,— chief and biggest pounder why he had not told me the truth that evening down by wee river,— and tried to make my answer, that I had no questions to ask, a truly honest answer.

He merely smiled and shook his head. I am not sure, now, what he meant by that smile and that head shake. As I was wondering, then, what it meant the answer to the biggest pounder popped into my mind. He had spoken, that evening, of sending Pat to school. He had wanted to leave things so that he might help — all that. I was just going to tell him about Mr. Miser's money when he spoke again. For once, the first time, I believe, he misread my thoughts.

"Yes," he said, "I told Tony the truth yesterday."

"And he?"

"Consciously he was disappointed. Subconsciously, I think, he was a bit relieved. Tony tires easily and Pat, in a hotel apartment, was, I fear, rather strenuous, at times. However, Tony's chief emotion yesterday was anger. He was wickedly angry with me. But then — he had the right to be. I have forgotten most of the things he had to say, but — a few of them —"

"Temper talk," I tried to comfort, "doesn't count for anything."

"I know. At any rate I am sure he was mistaken."

"Mistaken?"

"I am trying," he answered, "not to be a meddler, but — it is an effort."

"Please tell," I urged, because I could see that something extra was troubling him.

He hesitated. "Please tell," I urged again.

He told. He had gathered, somehow, though Tony's remarks had been largely incoherent, that the fact that I thought Tony was Pat's father was the reason I had refused to marry Tony. Perhaps he had been mistaken in Tony's meaning. It seemed, almost, as if he must have been, and yet Tony had kept repeating that Mr. Macelwayne's efforts had defeated themselves. Questioned about it, the next morning, Tony had refused to repeat or to explain.

I scarcely knew whether to laugh or whether to cry. I have never been able to decide whether sheer stupidity is a funny thing or a sad thing. The indecision made an answer rather difficult.

"But — of course," I began.

He was so eager for the answer that he took it right away from me: "But of course," he asserted, "that was an absurdity. Had you cared enough for Tony that could have made no difference."

"Not any difference at all," I assured him, "had I cared for Tony enough — that way, or had Tony cared enough for me. Neither of us did. That's all."

"But Tony —" he began argumentatively. How I

did bless Pat right then, as he came whooping in. He had discovered Mamma and Papa Putt. His hands were full of cookies and he was almost silly with excitement.

"Do you like these people?" Mr. Macelwayne questioned, turning to me.

"I love them."

"And they are not 'nearly' neighbors?"

"Not any. They are nearest dearest neighbors."

Then I tried to tell him some about them and their goodness, and then, right away it seemed, dusk came drifting down and Mr. Macelwayne said that he must go.

At the door I asked, in a low voice so that Pat might not hear, what I should have asked much earlier in the afternoon, only — I had forgotten.

"Tony," I said, "and the craving? How — is it going with him?"

"He seems to be completely over it," Mr. Macelwayne answered; "it is almost too good to be true, entirely too good to understand. Sometimes of late I have thought that there must be some other influence outside — some help —" He stopped too suddenly, and he looked rather as if he had bitten his tongue. "But of course it is not necessary for me to understand," he finished lamely.

"No," I answered, quite as lamely, and "I am so glad for Tony."

He took both of my hands in his, as he had done those other times: "Dear," he said, "dear child — good-night."

I answered good-night and took my hands away, and he left; and I came in and closed the door.

THE END

READING LIST

Rolland, Romain: "Jean-Christophe."— Tremendous. Too tremendous for such an ordinary mortal as I. Uncomfortable. Thoroughly. Lays bare one's ignorance and jeers at it. Tries to demolish one's illusions.

Huneker, James: "Mezzotints in Modern Music."— What an ignoramus I am!

Wells, H. G.: "The Passionate Friends."—"How are you going to protect the Great State of your dreams from the anti-citizenship of sex?"

Lewis, Sinclair: "The Trail of the Hawk."— Human. Poor overworked word. And yet it seems to be the fitting word for this book of real folks.

Lewis, E. H.: "Those About Trench." I believe the author knows everything in the world there is to know except women. I wonder — am I a Bogumel?

Browning, Robert: "The Ring and the Book."— (Reread of course.) When I read Browning I wonder, at first, why I ever trouble to read anyone else.

And then, after a few weeks of delight I grow, not less delighted, but tired of holding my breath and I put him aside for a while. I am not a Bogumel.

Chesterton, G. K.: "Robert Browning," Biography.—Chesterton, of course, not Browning, but sheer joy nevertheless.

Paine, Albert Bigelow: "Mark Twain's Biography."—Most of it chuck full of laughter; some of it chuck full of tears; every last bit of it chuck full of absorbing interest.

Mayne, E. C. — Biography of Byron.—I must stop reading biographies. I am getting snoopy. Can I ever read Byron again, I wonder, without remembering between lines that he put his hair up on curl papers at night. Shame on me! M. Y. O. B. Yes, I must stop reading biographies.

Masters, Edgar Lee: "Spoon River Anthology." No! No! No! Not that way.

Mamma Putt's recipe for sour milk pancakes.—Take as much flour as you want, and a pinch of salt and about enough sugar to sweeten it nicely and mix them together. Then put in the sour milk with about a teaspoon full of soda for each cup of milk and if you have some eggs to spare beat them up and put them in to make it richer. Cook on a hot griddle and when they bubble up turn them over.

Memo. Find out about Antokolsky.

"The joy of negative delights."

Prescription number for Pat's poison oak medicine:
The White Pharmacy. Number 61469.

Memo. May seventh, Mamma Putt's birthday.
June third, Papa Putt's. Don't forget, no matter
where you are.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

Up in Heaven, a few months ago, all the angels laughed and said: "A saucy mere mortal on earth has dared to take up a mundane pencil and write, in her life, 'The End.'" And the recording angel sulked a bit and said: "The earth folks are so assuming. Will they never learn that the writing of those words is my job?" But I rather think God apologized for me a bit, I rather think God often apologizes to the angels for us, and I rather think He said: "She did not mean to be saucy, silly, assuming; she is merely stupid."

Down on earth, two nights ago, the moon had a rainbow around it; all the colors were there, red and yellow and green and purple and orange. It sounds incredible, but it is true. The old moon itself was surprised, one could be sure of that from the bright white way it glowed, and the clouds were frightened, I know, for none of them would go near the spectacle.

All of my family and I stood, long, out in the February night, and watched and shivered, some from cold, some from awe, and I think all of my family shivered some from fright, too, because:

"You don't suppose anything is going to happen, do you, old scout?" he asked.

"Such as?" I questioned.

"Such as — the end of the world, or — or anything?"

I have ever been a conservative concerning the end of the world, as some folks are about socialism, and universal suffrage and things of the sort: I have a down deep conviction that because it never has been it never will be, so I was able to reassure all of my family with entire honesty. At least I was able to try to reassure him, but I think I did not wholly succeed because, when we had watched and wondered until the rainbow had dimmed out into the dark gray sky, and when we had gone into perch-edifice again, all of my family sighed, apprehensively:

"Seems like something might be going to happen," he said, "when rainbows come around the moon."

"Seems like," I agreed, "but if it does I am sure it will be something pleasant. Rainbows, you know, are pleasant things, symbols of hope — like that."

"Maybe," suggested all of my family, "we might decide to take Mr. Miser's money and go to darkest Africa."

It is his dearest dream so I never demolish it. "Maybe," I said.

In the world, I have read and heard, there are materialistic folks who lift their voices brazenly and

declare that they don't believe in miracles. Yet they have planted tiny gray green seeds and seen them flame into a fire of nasturtium blossoms; they have watched a dead brown-looking tree bloom into a mass of pink and white flowers, and they have seen those same flowers, frail and pink and white, turn into solid big red apples. What they mean to say, of course, is that they have grown accustomed to miracles. I have never been able to decide whether that, the growing accustomed to miracles, is a tragedy or whether it is another blessing to count.

Another blessing though, I think, because if the miracle of the rainbowed moon had not prepared me for the wonder of a deep gold and pink sunset, after a day of rain, I think I should have been quite silly this afternoon with the excitement and surprise of it. As it was I sat by the window and watched it, and waited for Pat to come home from the Putts', and was able to receive the beauty almost placidly. As it was, when I saw Mr. Macelwayne come walking down the trail it seemed only natural, only as it should be.

"Come in," I said, quite as if he had been coming in every day for the past few months, "and sit here by the window and let this beauty iron the wrinkles out of your soul, as you used to do."

He smiled: "Phyllis," he said, "as you might say, your name begins with a P and so does Peace."

It should have surprised me. It did not. Because

of the rainbowed moon and the sunset, I suppose, it seemed quite right that he should call me Phyllis, and as for Peace, why Peace was so close that I felt as if I were sitting in her lap. And when, after a few moments of silence, Mr. Macelwayne leaned forward in his chair and took my two hands in his, it seemed, simply, that that was where my hands belonged, and when he said: "Tony and Kitty were married last night," that, too, seemed as it should be and I answered that I was glad.

"Then," he said, "I am glad too."

It was good to be glad; good to have him glad with me; good to have peace so close; good to have my hands in his; and that was all I thought about, until he dropped my hands and leaned back in his chair and said:

"Tony told me, to-day, something he had no right to tell me, but now that I know I—I have to do something about it. That is why I am here, now. I don't mean to—meddle. But—I'm sure you'll understand. That is—"

"What," I asked, trying to help him, "did Tony tell you?"

He stopped looking at me and looked out of the window: "He told me," he answered, rather slowly, "that the reason you refused to marry him was because you—loved another man."

"Yes," I said,

"Did you mean the man who died?"

"No," I answered, "I didn't mean Henry. I never did love Henry. I know now. Henry loved me. There is a deal of difference."

"Yes," he answered, "I—I know."

Then, as he turned from the sunset to me, I knew. Never had he looked so old, so tired and troubled as he looked right then; but, through the lenses of his glasses, and out through of the blue of his eyes, the knowledge came shining, as vivid as sunshine, for me to see. For a moment it dazzled me, frightened me too, and I looked away, and then he took my hands in his, again, and called me, "Dear child."

"Dear child,"—so he said it—"won't you let me help you in this? If I were your father—"

"Only," I interrupted, "you are not my father."

"If I were," he persisted, "you would understand that I—I need to have you happy. Call it an old man's whim—selfishness—no matter what you call it. I—can't live in a world where you live and are unhappy." He paused, looked over at the fire dropping into coals, looked out at the sunset dimming into ash gray, and went on: "This—man whom you care for, is he free?"

"Yes," I said.

"There was a misunderstanding? Well, it must be cleared up. Straightened. Of course I don't know the circumstances. If you could—tell me?"

Trust me? Let me be adequate — for once? Help. It is all I — That is, it is all I —"

I could not stand it another moment, not one: "Yes," I said, "I want to tell you, and trust you. For months I have loved, but things were all in a tangle. I thought he did not care for me — that way, Now — I know that he does. But I know, too, that he will never tell me about it, because he thinks the knowledge could be only a burden to me. Wait —" as he tried to interrupt, "and let me finish. You said you wanted to help me? Then — tell me what to do and — I'll do it."

Not one instant did he hesitate: "Go to him," he said, "where ever he is, and tell him the truth."

So I went to him and told him the truth.

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Matthew thinks that we should be married to-morrow. I think so, too. So we are going to be married to-morrow, here in perch-edifice.

One reason why I think we should be married to-morrow is that Matthew has developed a sudden predilection for mental arithmetic and argumentation. He insists on doing sums, silly ones like the ones we used to have in our school books, so: "If Matthew is twice the age of Phyllis, lacking five years, then —" Now if I were to wait a week he might have time to find the answer to the sum, and then he might decide that I was far too young for a wife.

His argumentative efforts are less dangerous but they are extravagant. He wastes good time, better used for wiser purposes, on them.

"A dozen times a day," he argued, once, "you showed that you cared for Tony. Never did you let loose so much as a look to show that you cared for me."

"And just that," I insisted, "should have told the truth to you more loudly than any words could have told. Kitty saw, at least at first, until she got so blinded with her desire for Tony that she thought every woman must be wanting him."

"Would you mind telling me," he asked, "what it was that Kitty saw?"

"She saw that I loved Tony because you loved him, just as I would have loved anything, a dog, a baby, anything but another woman, whom you loved. He seemed to be right at the core of your heart, so he must be good and strong and happy. That was why I was jealous of Kitty: I had tried so hard and she succeeded without trying, and — you were grateful to her."

"Speaking of Kitty," he said, "would you mind telling me, now, what it was that she saw?" He is rather greedy about words, some words, three words, is my dear.

Just after I had finished telling him I heard Pat and Papa Putt in the kitchen, and I went to get Papa

Putt because I wanted him to come in and be introduced to Matthew. He seemed, for some reason, reluctant. He had come to see whether I needed some wood chopped. He was not dressed up to meet strangers. Some other time —

"Never mind excuses, Joe," came Matthew's voice from right over my shoulder, "we haven't any more secrets now, this little person and I."

It was Matthew who had bought nearly neighbor's place. It was Matthew who had known the Putts for years, and had found them away back east, and brought them out and put them close to perch-edifice, for me.

"Old sport," so all of my family interrupted, just now, "you have an awfully silly expression on your face,— or did you know?"

"No," I answered, "I didn't know. Thank you for telling."

His next question was more polite: "Why," he asked, "are you and Mr. Macelwayne going to be married to-morrow?"

"Because I love him, and because he loves me, and because we know it," I replied, trying to say it sensibly, trying not to sing it.

"Yes, I know," said all of my family, wrinkling his nose with worry, "that's about what he said when I asked him. But — just what means 'love,' Phyl?"

"I — don't know," I answered. I, who through all these months and pages have prattled so knowingly of love, could answer to-night, simply that.

"In pictures," said all of my family, "it is a little fat baby without any clothes on, and with wings and a bow and arrow."

"I believe," I said, after I had thought for a while, "I believe that right up through the centuries the artist folks have been mistaken when they have painted those pictures of Love. I don't like the fatness of figure, nor the flightiness of wings, nor the bow and arrow. If I were to paint his picture it would not be like that, not at all. I'd have him a baby, I think, because I believe babies are the wisest ones in the world. But I'd make him a sturdy, well-conditioned, little fellow, who walks his ways instead of flying, and I'd never permit the bow and arrow. He doesn't go shooting at people. When things hurt them it is not love that hurts, it could not be; it is jealousy, or selfishness, or — greediness, something like that. It isn't wise, either, to try to call love by another name, nickname it. I tried it once, and got it all wrong, I managed — triumph —"

"Triumph?" interrupted all of my family. "Maybe then that is what Mr. Macelwayne meant."

"What Mr. Macelwayne meant?" I echoed.

"Ye'a, when I asked him what love was he said he

didn't know but he thought, as you would say, that it was something that begins with a 't.' I suppose he meant what you said?"

"No," I answered, "I suppose he did not mean that."

So now I have been through the dictionary, through tabby-cats and tears and termigants, through tomahawks and trapezoids, trombones and trumpets, to find that something which begins with "t." Not far from the trombones, right after the trumpets I found it, and I knew. Truth, that is what my dear says love is, and who am I to contradict when he is so wise?

And now, because the remainder of my life is to be a lived life, with no room in it for ledgers, I am going to close this one for forever, writing here not "The End" but

THE BEAUTIFUL BEGINNING.



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